THE SORCERY SHOP: An Impossible Romance, by Robert Blatchford

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THE SORCERY SHOP

THE SORCERY SHOP: An Impossible Romance, by Robert Blatchford

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UTOPIA

To
MOTHER

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Utopian romance may at first sight appear to be an easy form of political exposition, but it has many difficulties.

To begin with minor details. How is one to forecast the fashions of Utopia in the matters of architecture and costume? To invent a new architecture and a new dress one needs be a genius indeed. And I notice that in "News from Nowhere" even William Morris takes refuge in generalisation.

And then there is the larger question of the development of machinery. Would the Utopians use more machinery, or less? Who can tell? At any rate, I did not judge it wise to introduce flying machines and motor boats and wonderful inventions for saving labour and annihilating distance.

It is only reasonable to suppose that in a wisely-ordered commonwealth the best energies of a highly-trained and intelligent people would be directed towards the improvement of all the conditions of national, civic, and domestic life; but I have left all that to the imagination of the reader, and have tried to show the possibility of organising and carrying on a prosperous and healthy commune without

calling in any other mechanical aids than those of which we are already the masters.

To indicate the possibilities of communal efforts, to show what might be done with England by a united and cultured English people, and to meet the common arguments brought against Socialism by the Storms and Jorkles was the purpose I had in view.

To a divided, ignorant, and antagonistic people, such as Carlyle compares to "a pitcher of Egyptian vipers, each struggling to get its head above the rest," the problem of life must seem bewildering, terrible—hopeless.

But to an ordered and wise nation that problem would be simple and easy. For our country is by nature opulent. We have a favourable climate, and an almost unlimited endowment of natural wealth. Our people are, or would be under proper conditions, hardy, industrious, placable, and inventive. The labour of one man, properly directed, and with the mechanical aids we now possess, would suffice to supply the needs of many.

Poverty, crime, disease, war, drunkenness, and ignorance are all preventable evils. Were it not for the ignorance of the many, and the foolish greed and vanity of the few, we might have a happy, healthy, and beautiful England now.

But we are that we are because so far it has been impossible to make the rich and the poor understand.

Will they ever understand? I dare not prophesy. But I know that it is the duty of every earnest and humane citizen to use his best

powers to dispel ignorance and diffuse knowledge. One cannot move mountains; one cannot conquer Fate; but one can do his duty, and it is as true to-day as it was a century ago that "no captain can do far wrong who lays his ship alongside that of an enemy."

THE SORCERY SHOP

AN IMPOSSIBLE ROMANCE

CHAPTER ONE THE INKWELL

THE smoke-room of the Directorate Club—sometimes playfully called the "Guinea Pigs," because the membership was confined to directors of public companies—was rich and solid, like its illustrious owners; but it was not homely. It smelt of stale tobacco; it had a northern aspect; its chairs and sofas bore themselves unpropitiously; its colours were harsh and sombre. Indeed, a casual visitor with no intimate comprehension of the financial soul to guide him, must have marvelled how such an extravagance of carved mahogany, and stamped leather, and gilt moulding, and tapestry curtain, and pile carpet had resulted in an effect so mean and comfortless.

On one particular morning, a raw, bleak morning, in early May, the home of the "Guinea Pigs" looked its unfriendliest and hardest.

On this occasion there were only three members present. Two of them, seated at a table on which stood a tray of biscuits and two glasses of sherry and bitters, were talking. The other sat bolt upright in a huge armchair, reading a copy of *The Times*.

The gentlemen at the table were very important personages indeed; for one of them was Major-General Sir Frederick Manningtree Storm, Conservative M.P. for South Loomshire, and the other was Mr. Samuel Jorkle, Liberal M.P. for Shantytown East.

The Honourable Member for Shantytown East was a highly respectable and influential professional patriot and financier: one of those great captains of industry who have made England what she is, and are somewhat extravagantly proud of the achievement. The dream of his life, according to the club wit, was to form a combine of all the big noses in Ivory and Old Bones, and perpetrate a corner in false teeth.

Mr. Jorkle was, for so eminent and successful a financial magnate, somewhat undistinguished in appearance. He was, to be candid, a bald, pompous, corpulent man of sixty, with watery eyes, thin lips, a bulbous nose, a gold cable watchchain, a diamond ring, gold-rimmed pebbles, and flat feet.

Major-General Sir Frederick Storm was a distinguished and richly decorated professional homicide; a vicious, choleric, brave, arrogant, gouty, liverish, obtuse old Tory of the bluest blue, who had defended his country upon a hundred fields, where the inscrutable decrees of

Providence had destined her to exploit recalcitrant natives. He believed himself, with a strange sincerity, to be an honourable and exemplary member of the better classes.

In appearance he was the typical aristocrat, retired from the army, well-dressed, well-groomed, tall, and lean; his sharp face, dyed purple with Southern wines and Eastern suns. He wore the grizzled, fierce moustaches of the old *sabreur*, and his hard grey eyes stared insolently at the world from under their heavy white brows.

"The worst of it is," said Mr. Jorkle—they were talking about the Socialists—"that all this preposterous advertisement they are getting just now in the Press may have the effect of making capital shy."

"It will have the effect of making capital *bolt*, sir," answered the Major-General, emphasising the pun.

"Of course," said Mr. Jorkle, pursing up his thin lips, "I don't believe that any sensible person will take their hysterical nonsense seriously, but—the boom should be stopped."

"Take them seriously?" said the General; "*I'd* take them seriously, in a way they would like precious little. A parcel of illiterate, lazy, tub-thumping levellers. I'd level 'em, by George!"

"Ah," sighed Mr. Jorkle, "the idea of the fools imagining they could carry on the country without capital! Capital, sir, is wings and feet and heart and lungs. Abolish capital, and the cock won't fight, sir."

"Abolish capital?" cried the honourable and

gallant member for South Loomshire, "*I'd* abolish 'em, dammit!"

These were the very words of that remarkable man.

"If they ever did get a Socialist State," continued Mr. Jorkle, "which God forbid, they would very soon have enough of it. Nice place it would be, with all the incentives to enterprise destroyed; individuality crushed out; intellect subordinated to the petty tyranny of illiterate and unintelligent demagogues; all the life and spirit of the nation paralysed by a machine-like system of espionage and interference; the nation stagnant at a dead level of mediocrity, and life reduced to a horrible penal round of dull and colourless monotony." The Honourable Member for East Shantytown paused, with one hand a little raised; his earnestness had betrayed him into something very like a speech.

"Pooh, pooh, sir!" cried General Storm, hotly, "I say pooh, pooh! Who is going to trust those unwashed ragamuffins with the helm of Government? One might as well select a Cabinet from the—hah—prisons and idiot asylums. A Socialist State, begad! Pretty kettle of fish! Dustman paid as well as a field-marshal. Jack as good as his master. Prime Minister, in a flannel shirt, dropping aitches all over the House, by George! And a Chancellor of the Exchequer trying to squeeze estimates out of nowhere, after he has killed the goose that laid the golden eggs! If I'd *my* way with the fools, dammit——"

Here the honourable and gallant gentleman

was interrupted by a question from the little man behind *The Times*.

"You have, I presume, studied Socialism on its practical side, General Storm?" said the little old gentleman.

The two great men stared at the questioner in silence, for a few moments. The gold spectacles seemed to say, "What are *you*, sir?" The monocle seemed to ask, "Who the devil are *you*, and how dare you speak to me without an introduction?"

The stranger smiled and took a pinch of snuff.

He was small and thin, with a hairless, wrinkled face, and bushy grey hair. He might have been any age between sixty and ninety. He was dressed in old-fashioned black garments, with a black satin stock and Gladstonian collar. His lips flickered with dry, satirical smiles, and his eyes twinkled and gleamed out of the deep, pent-house shadows of his brows, like sparks of green and blue fire.

After an interval of frosty silence the General spoke. "I did not know, sir," he said, coldly, "that Socialism *had* a practical side. You—hah—you have the advantage of me, sir."

"I beg your pardon, General," said the old gentleman, with a bow, "my name is Fry: Nathaniel Fry, of Wells and Wells, in Simmery Axe."

"Wells and Wells," said Mr. Jorkle, doubtfully; "may I ask what they are in?"

"Art," said Mr. Fry.

"Art!" The gold rims looked surprise; the monocle contempt.

"Yes, sir; black and white."

"You don't mean newspaper work!" exclaimed Mr. Jorkle.

Mr. Fry laughed softly and tapped his gold snuff-box. "No," he said, in a slow, distinct way; "no, sir. I mean art. Black art, and white art; or, as I should prefer to call it, black magic, and white magic. I am a wizard —a magician."

Having made this amazing statement, as calmly as if he had been declaring himself a dealer in jute, the queer little man took a pinch of snuff, and offered the box to each of the two great men in turn.

Then, the offer being politely declined, he closed the box with a snap, and, as he did that, a flash of blue fire burst from under the lid.

Mr. Jorkle laughed. The General looked on in contemptuous silence.

"Hullo!" said Mr. Jorkle, "magic?"

"H'm! The fact is," said Mr. Fry, "this is a curious box." With that he took another pinch of snuff, and, after inhaling it, blew from his nostrils a long, thin, spiral of bright green smoke. It was no ordinary smoke either, for it floated across the room in writhing rings until it swirled and twisted itself into the letters "N. Fry." "My signature, gentlemen," said the little man, with an odd smile.

"Gad!" exclaimed the General, thawing somewhat, "that's a deuced clever trick, by George! Beats Maskelyne and Cooke! Hey?"

"You flatter me," said Mr. Fry. He placed the snuff-box on the table. "Will you oblige me by opening it?" he asked.

Mr. Jorkle raised the lid, and started as a white mouse leaped out, and, tumbling off the table, vanished in a puff of smoke on the carpet.

The magnates laughed. And the General declared that 'pon his word Mr. Fry "ought to be on the halls."

The old gentleman shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly. "Toys," he said, "toys to amuse the young."

"Toys!" exclaimed Mr. Jorkle, in his bland, patronising manner. "I call it exceedingly clever conjuring."

"Pardon me," said Mr. Fry, "I should not call it conjuring. I should call it magic." Then, as the magnates smiled, he added, "You do not believe in magic?"

"Hah!" said the General, "hardly, at this time of day."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Fry, "you will allow me to show you something less elementary."

"With pleasure," said Mr. Jorkle, "but don't be too magical, Mr. Fry. Don't turn us into dumb waiters, or umbrella stands." And Mr. Jorkle laughed ponderously over his own wit.

"My dear sir," said Mr. Fry, gravely, "I assure you that our firm would never presume to take such a liberty. But will you kindly step with me into the lift for a moment?"

The magnates seemed to think this was taking a good deal of trouble for the sake of a mere joke, but after a brief hesitation assented, and the three gentlemen stepped out upon the landing. "Rabbit," said Mr. Fry, to the attendant, "kindly allow us to go down in your lift. We shall return shortly."

To Mr. Jorkle's surprise, the commissionaire made no objection. The three gentlemen entered the lift, Rabbit closed the door, Mr. Fry touched the button, and they descended.

"Gentlemen, allow me," said Mr. Fry, as the lift came to a stop, and he opened the door and bowed his guests into an apartment upon which neither of them had ever before set eyes.

It was a circular room, the walls panelled in brown oak, the ceiling panelled in brown oak, the floor of brown oak parqueterie. There was no furniture of any kind; there were no pictures nor decorations, no windows, nor firegrates, nor doors; but from the centre of the ceiling a large opalescent globe lamp was suspended, giving a soft bright light.

The magnates looked at their strange host and at each other in mute surprise. The lift rose slowly through the ceiling; the panels closing after it. Then Mr. Fry spoke.

"Gentlemen," he said, "this is my private office, at No. 70, Simmery Axe."

"Simmery Axe!" said Mr. Jorkle, "oh, come!"

"If you will be kind enough to glance out of the window, Mr. Jorkle," said the host. "Ah, I forgot." As he spoke he clapped his hands and a circular window opened in the oaken wall, as the rose aperature opens in a camera. "Now, sir," said Mr. Fry.

Mr. Jorkle stepped to the window and looked out. "Yes," he said, doubtfully, "yes, yes, that is Simmery Axe—or seems to be. But how we have got from the West End to the

City in a few seconds and by way of the club lift, I don't pretend to understand."

"Magic," remarked the General, drily.

"Thank you, sir," said Mr. Fry, "allow me to offer you a glass of the best wine in the world. Light!"

As he uttered the word "Light" in a sharp tone a handsome youth in evening dress appeared. He did not come in, nor up, nor down; he appeared.

"Yes, sir," said Light.

"Refreshments, Light," said Mr. Fry, "and a nice, clean goblin."

"Yes, sir."

Light touched his nose, and an electric bell rang. Immediately there rose through the floor a handsome old oak table and three of the most luxurious armchairs that ever lured a human being to slumber.

"Be seated, gentlemen, please," said Mr. Fry, quietly. "Light, the wine."

Light smiled, produced a large decanter of wine from the tail pocket of his dress coat; drew three ancient cut-glass beakers from his sleeves, and vanished.

"Well, upon my word, Mr. Fry," said Mr. Jorkle, "you beat all the magicians I've ever seen. Good God! what's that?"

The General looked round sharply, and beheld, standing at his elbow, a fearsome creature like a frog, in a page boy's livery.

"That," explained Mr. Fry, placidly, "is one of our goblins. He is spotty, but innocuous. Spots, get the Ink Well ready for use." Spots saluted, and vanished.

"Now, gentlemen," said Mr. Fry, as he filled the glasses, "the club wine is good, as I need not tell you. But I think—I hope—this is better. Gentlemen, my respects."

The host and his guests took their wine simultaneously. As they replaced the empty glasses upon the board, Mr. Jorkle sighed, and the General said, emphatically, "By George! By George, sir, that is a devilish good wine. If magic can make a wine like that——" Here the General stopped speaking and stared at a picture in the panel opposite to his chair. "Hallo!" he said, after a pause, "that's a deuced pretty girl. Hah! reminds me of a girl I met—hah—at Penally—hah—let me see—it must have been in the sixties—hah—devilish sweet sort of girl—hah—hum."

The General hahed and hummed himself into a silent reverie. Somewhere a thrush began to sing. As Mr. Fry refilled the glasses the glug glug of the bottle reminded Mr. Jorkle of a brook—a brook in a green, green wood. And that was strange, for Mr. Jorkle had not heard a brook prattle for more than thirty years.

"If you gentlemen believed in magic," said Mr. Fry, with a curious smile, "I should say that this is magic wine."

"Magic or not," said the General, "we'll finish it, by George."

They sat and finished the wine in silence. And the thrush went on singing, and the pretty girl in the picture seemed to look on smilingly, and the General curled his moustaches and gazed sternly at the toes of his patent leather boots.

At length Mr. Fry rose and clapped his hands, whereupon a panel in the wall slid silently back, and saying, "This way, gentlemen, if you please," the host led the way into another room.

This was a domed room, the roof cunningly contrived to represent the night sky in which the stars sparkled like gems. In the centre of the marble floor was a circular black pool, some seven or eight feet in diameter, and surrounded by a flat pewter ledge.

"That," said Mr. Fry, pointing to the black pool, "is the Ink Well. You have doubtless heard of the magic properties of ink."

"Hah, yes," said the General, "Indian deviltry. Look into blot of ink in the hand, and see wonders, don't you know, and that sort of thing."

"Precisely. Many marvels have been seen in ink. With your permission, I will show you some."

Again the wizard clapped his hands, and a pear-shaped car or cabinet came down through the roof and settled upon the black pool, like a balloon floating in water.

"Our Crystal Car, gentlemen," said the wizard. He whistled and a door opened in the car, and, saying, "Kindly follow me," he stepped in and sat down. The others followed; the door was shut, and the car sank swiftly into the darkness.

"How do you get your light?" asked Mr. Jorkle; "there are no lamps, and the walls seem to be opaque."

"Certainly," replied the wizard. "They are

solid crystal, and are immersed in black ink; but the car is lined with moonbeams."

The General coughed, and, to change the subject, remarked: "Talking of light, that's a smart young fellow, that Light of yours."

"Yes," said Mr. Fry, mildly, "an excellent fellow. Quite a superior fellow. He is a thief."

"A thief!"

"Well, he *was* a thief. He tried to steal my watch. That is how I first came to know him. And I brought him over to Simmery Axe on a broomstick, and taught him the business. He is very clever in the lighter branches."

"Not the light-fingered branches?"

"Eh! oh no. He is very good at dreams. His nightmares are really works of art. I hope to make him head of the haunting department soon. He is so clever with the ghosts. There is not a ghost in England who wouldn't do anything to oblige Light."

"Indeed," said the General, "ah, I will not trouble you with idle questions. I don't mind where we may be going, so long as we are not bored when we get there, don't you know; but —hah—I hope we shall be back in time for lunch."

"Oh," said Mr. Fry, "but I hope you will lunch with me—there."

"With pleasure," said Mr. Jorkle, "for I am hungry: but I don't know where 'there' may be."

"There is here," answered the wizard, as the car came to rest. "And now, gentlemen,

we are in an impossible country, inhabited by impossible people, who do impossible things, and are impossibly happy. I hope you will be amused. Allow me to open the door."

CHAPTER TWO
PARADISE REGAINED

HE three stepped out into a great green wood. Around them the tall, proud beeches lifted their long, sinuous boughs, like arms held up in gladness to the spring. The young green foliage was more luminous than gems; the spangles of blue sky between silver branch and emerald plume glowed like old stained glass in a cathedral window; the mossy path was dappled with fluttering, soft lights and tender shadows; and in the balmy sea-green twilight overhead a blackcap sang passionately with the exceeding joy that almost chords with pain.

The wizard's guests looked round them curiously. "Fine timber," said Mr. Jorkle.

"Lots of game about here, eh?" remarked the General.

"To be sure, to be sure," answered the little man, with his dry smile; "timber to sell, and game to kill. Why not?"

He remained silent for a moment, standing in a pool of quivering golden sunlight, and looked at the two Philistines with a puckering of his face, and a queer gleam in his eyes. Then, as he drew forth the magic snuff box, and tapped the lid, he said, in clear-cut and deliberate words: "In this strange country,

gentlemen, there is no selling and no killing: none."

"What!" cried his guests, staring at him blankly.

"In this country," the little man went on, "they have neither money nor guns; not a weapon, not a cartridge; not a banknote, bill, nor coin. I told you it was an impossible place." He took a pinch of snuff, and the three walked on in silence.

In a little while they reached the fringe of the wood, and came out upon a broad plateau, the grass of which was cut short, like a lawn. From this the land fell away in a gentle slope, now all ablaze with the sunny yellow flowers of the gorse. Round the foot of the slope wound a broad, shallow stream, so clear that the pebbles on its speckled bed were quite plain to the eye. This stream was crossed at intervals by light wooden bridges, simple but elegant in design; and hard by one of these a great blue heron stood amongst the flowering rushes, complacently preening his feathers.

Mr. Fry halted on the crown of the slope and waved his hand. "I think, gentlemen," he said, "you will like this view."

Beyond the green lawn, and the golden gorse, and the silver stream, spread out a gracious plain. It was such a plain as the Philistines had never dreamed of; but they were not good at dreams.

It was an orchard plain, a plain of flowering trees, in the midst of which was built a city. The roofs and towers and gables of the town

stood up like red and white islands out of a broad sea of blossom.

"A fair sight, a fair sight on a fine May morning," said Mr. Fry.

For a while the Philistines gazed silently at the marvellous dream city and its sea of flowers. They saw the red roofs glowing amid the billows of delicate pink and white. They saw the domes and towers of marble palaces, and the graceful shaft of a tall campanile with a gleaming golden crown. They heard the rhythmic hurry of a carillon, sounding wonderfully from some distant belfry, and the throbbing and champing music of a marching band, afar off in the hidden streets. Below them ran the chuckling river; above them spread the glistening azure sky; behind them the thrush sang rapturously in the leafy wood. The dew-washed air was sweet with the perfume of blossom and flower, and suffused by the sun with a rosy glow.

The old wizard, in his rusty black, stood looking at his companions with his sparky eyes to mark the effects of the vision.

"Hah!" came at last from the General. "Hah! Where the devil *are* we, Mr. Fry?"

Mr. Fry, his hands under his coat tails, his legs apart, and his head inclined to one side, stood like some crafty and satirical old crow watching a Cockney with a gun.

"What town is this, sir?" asked Mr. Jorkle.

"Gentlemen," said the wizard, smiling slily, "have you ever been to Manchester?"

His guests laughed.

"Manchester," Mr. Fry continued, "is a dirty,

unhandsome, smoky city. Rich, but mean. Eh?"

"Beastly hole!" said the General.

"Well, gentlemen," said the wizard, spreading his legs wider, and looking more like a crow than ever, "*this* is Manchester." He waved his hand towards the flowery plain. "This city of health and beauty, of happy homes, and noble palaces, of trees and flowers, this Paradise regained, is Manchester—Manchester under impossible conditions."

The Honourable Member for Shantytown East adjusted his spectacles; Major-General Sir Frederick Manningtree Storm put up his monocle. Both regarded the wizard sternly for some moments. Then Mr. Jorkle asked curtly, "What building is that—the big marble place, with high towers?"

Mr. Fry laughed silently before he answered. Then he said, "That, sir, is the Hulme Town Hall."

"Town Hall!" exclaimed the General. "It looks like a royal palace, by George! I began to think the King had come to live here, by Jove!"

"There is no king," quoth Mr. Fry.

"No king!" The two guests started. Then the General said tartly: "No king! You don't mean to say there's a beastly president, dammit?"

"There is no president," quoth Mr. Fry.

"But, but," cried Mr. Jorkle, swelling with consequence, "there must be—er—somebody. What kind of government have they here?"

The wizard, in his driest tones, replied: "Sir, this healthy, wealthy, and happy people,

this great people, have no government at all: none of any kind, sir."

"Must be a devilish queer place to live in," said the General.

"It is," replied the wizard, with a kind of tender gravity, "the happiest nation the world has ever known."

"I'm glad I don't live here, at any rate," said Mr. Jorkle.

"I, too," said the General.

"Well, gentlemen, we shall see, we shall see," said the wizard, smiling; "but, now, suppose we walk into the town and get some lunch."

"Hah," said the General, "they do eat and drink, then? That's better. I began to think the natives were a lot of beastly angels."

"The Manchester people used not to be angels," remarked Mr. Jorkle.

"Hah! Didn't look it, certainly," assented the General: "used to be an undersized, smoke-dried lot of little beggars, by Jove, with bandy legs—hah—and that sort of thing."

"Let us walk on," said Mr. Fry; "we shall meet some of the people by the way."

On this the three followed the winding path through the scented gorse, and crossed the bridge where the heron stood.

"Cool customer, that bird," said the General, surprised that the heron showed no fear.

"Yes," said the wizard, "all the wild things hereabouts are very bold; and," he added, quietly, "the people love them so."

Crossing a strip of meadow, where the primroses and violets were so thickly intermixed that the sward suggested some wonderful

Oriental carpet, the three came into the highway.

"This," said the wizard, "is the Chester Road."

It was a wide road—so wide that after the first glance Mr. Jorkle remarked, with characteristic astuteness, "land must be cheap about here."

But the wizard shook his head. "Land," he said, "is very dear. It is so dear that the most popular hero, the greatest benefactor of the people, could not beg, nor buy, a single square foot to call his own. The land here, like the air and the sea, is *pro bono publico*."

Mr. Jorkle looked at the General. They both looked at the Chester Road.

"You will notice certain peculiarities about this road," said Mr. Fry. "You will observe that it is a wide road, with a broad band of well-kept grass along each side, nearest the gardens. You will observe that the houses are very handsome and homely, and are all detached, each standing in its own garden. There are no walls nor hedges between these gardens and the road. As a matter of fact, there is not a lock nor a fastening in all Manchester."

"Good Ged!" said the General.

"You will notice, further," Mr. Fry went on, "that the avenue which runs the whole length of this long road is composed wholly of fruit trees."

"And do you mean to tell *me*, sir," Mr. Jorkle asked, warmly, "that people here are so honest that they will not steal the fruit from

these trees, and that no thief will ever enter these houses?"

"'Honest' is not the right word," answered the wizard; "the people here would no more think of robbing each other's houses than you and Sir Frederick Storm would think of picking each other's pockets."

"But—hah—dash it all, Mr. Fry," said the General, "don't they steal the fruit? Don't the boys, begad, hook the apples?"

"They take the apples, no doubt, if they want them," said Mr. Fry; "but they don't *steal* them. The apples are grown by the people, for the people to use. Moreover—ah, here are some of the natives!"

As he spoke, two young men, dressed in cricketing flannels, came out of an adjacent garden and walked towards the three. They were tall men, with bronzed complexions, dark hair, and grey eyes.

"Come," said the wizard, "these Manchester men are not stunted and crooked, General. They are handsome, alert, well-set-up fellows, and more than common tall. You might find a couple of finer men in the Life Guards, and—you might not. Eh?"

"Hah!" said the General, "they are smart, upstandin' chaps, certainly. Yes, begad, and they carry themselves like men. But these are gentlemen, of course."

The wizard shook his head. "There are no gentlemen here," he said, "and no ladies."

"Hah!" said the General, "that reminds me, what are the women like?"

"The women?" Mr. Fry wrinkled up his

eyes and laughed. "Oh, the women. I'm afraid I'm not magician enough to describe them. They worship their women here; consequently, my dear General, the women are—like that." He turned his eyes towards a lawn on his right.

There was a woman standing in the pathway, trimming the flowers. She met their look with a bright, friendly smile, and a "Good morning, friends," that sounded as fresh and merry as the laughter of a child.

The three raised their hats and returned the greeting as they passed. And there was silence for a little while. Then Mr. Fry said, "*that* is a woman." And the General, curling his moustache, replied, "Yes, by George, that *is* a woman!"

"But," Mr. Jorkle said, in a puzzled, half querulous tone, "she must be a lady. She has the bearing of a lady. She is dressed as a lady. Besides, only well-to-do people could live in a road like this."

"My friend," said the wizard, in his dry way, "*all* the people of this country are well-to-do people. They are the wealthiest and happiest people the world has ever known."

"They are," said the General, emphatically, "a devilish handsome people, if they are at all like those we have seen."

"Those houses," Mr. Jorkle said, "would let for a hundred a year in England."

"Black hair," mused the General, "dusky and fine; a figure like a goddess, a smile like a baby, and purple eyes. Hah! Hang it, Fry, couldn't you conjure one or two into Simmery Axe?"

"H'm! Do you think," said Mr. Jorkle, "that you could conjure some lunch?"

"Why, of course," answered the wizard, "we will go and lunch with the goddess."

"Do you know her?" asked the General, rather eagerly.

"I know the country; that is enough," said Mr. Fry, and he at once set off, and the others, somewhat doubtfully, followed him.

The goddess saw them turn, and actually walked out into the road to meet them.

"Madam," said the wizard, "we are three strangers, and——"

"You would like some lunch," struck in the goddess, with a beautiful smile. "Please come in. I will ask my daughter to get something. You would like it in the garden, I suppose, so that you can sit and look at the cherry trees, and the white lilac?" With another of her wonderful smiles, she added: "I am Mrs. Arthur Lascelles. My husband is at the Town Hall; he is putting up a new lightning rod on the tower."

"Madam," said the wizard, "I thank you. My name is Fry. Allow me to introduce my friends, General Storm, and Mr. Jorkle."

The introductions were made, the gentlemen bowing, and Mrs. Lascelles performing an elegant curtsey, and the party walked into a beautiful garden, where the guests sat down at a table under a great lilac tree, while the lady withdrew to arrange about the lunch.

"Well, this is a most extraordinary place," said the General. "Do you mean to say you never met this lady before?"

"Never," answered the wizard, "but I know the customs of the country. She would see that we were strangers by our dress. Pleasant smile, hasn't she?"

"It is the most deadly smile I've ever seen," said the General. "A smile like that would play the devil with a whole station. *What* did she say her husband was up to?"

"Painting rods on a roof," said Mr. Jorkle, with a sardonic chuckle.

"It is," said the General, "the damnedest, most extraordinary thing I've ever heard or seen in four continents. I suppose her man's a hodman, or a blacksmith, or something impossible, and he lives in a villa, and his wife's a wood nymph, or a siren, and has purple eyes and stands free lunches to tramps."

"Here comes her daughter," said the wizard, as a tall and exceedingly pretty girl emerged from the French window and walked across the lawn, carrying a tray with some goblets and dishes on it.

The three arose and went to her assistance. Introductions followed, the table was set, and the lunch began. It was excellent of its kind, and consisted of soup, a curry with rice, a pumpkin pie, potato straws, stuffed olives, some first-rate bread, and—iced water in an Arabian carafe.

"The people here," Mr. Fry explained, "do not drink any kind of alcoholic liquors. There is not a drop of wine, spirits, or beer in the country."

"Ha!" said the General, "precious good job,

too, by George! But I should like a whisky and soda."

"Very good," said the wizard. "Light!"

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed the General, "you don't mean to say——"

"Sir," said Light, quietly. He had "appeared."

"Whisky and soda, please," said Mr. Fry.

Light produced a decanter of old Irish whisky from his left ear and a syphon of soda water from his waistcoat pocket and vanished.

The General, who was getting beyond the reach of surprise, said, "Thanks awfully," and helped himself. The other gentlemen drank water.

A few minutes later Mrs. Lascelles and her daughter came out and asked their guests if the lunch had been to their liking.

"It was magnificent, thank you, madam," said Jorkle.

"Especially the curry," the General remarked, and added that he supposed it was a vegetable curry.

"Naturally," replied the hostess.

"Hah, to be sure," said the General. "I mean that you had put no meat into it."

"Meat?" said Mrs. Lascelles, with a look of surprise. "What is meat?"

The General looked at Mr. Fry, who said, "The General has been much abroad, and is learned in Eastern spices." Then, with a meaning glance at Sir Frederick, he said, "Meat is unknown here."

Here Charlotte Maud—so Miss Lascelles was named—created a diversion by asking the

guests if they were going to the choral festival?

"Ah, and where is the festival?" inquired Mr. Fry.

"It is at the Town Hall, at two o'clock. Mother is singing, and I shall be playing the violin. We have a band of a hundred and fifty, and a chorus of three hundred. There will be a great many people there: quite ten thousand. I do hope you will come."

"Certainly," said Mr. Fry, "It will please us greatly."

"I'm sure it will, sir," said Charlotte Maud, "the music is very good indeed, and we have a new soloist, a soprano, with a marvellous voice. Her name is Dorothy Suthers. She is a weaver. She made the rugs for the Mother's Parlour in the City Hall. They say she is to sing at the opera in London next season."

"We shall take care to be in time," said the wizard, and, having once more thanked their hostess in suitable terms, the three travellers set out for the Town Hall.

When they had gone a little way, the General, taking out his cigar case, said, "I say, Mr. Fry, do these peculiar people smoke?"

The wizard shook his head.

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Jorkle.

"You will admit, I think," said the wizard, "when you have seen something of them, that these people appear to be very healthy and happy; and, after all, smoking, drinking, and meat eating are only habits, and bad habits at that."

"Quite so, quite so," the General remarked; "most drinks and all meats are gouty, I know;

but I like a bottle of wine, or a whisky peg, and I must have my cigar. Yes, hang it all, I must have my cigar."

"But," protested Mr. Jorkle, "will these impossible persons try to force their fads upon *us?*"

"Oh, no," answered the wizard; "but in Rome—it is as well to humour the Romans. I mean to say, these people would be as much shocked to hear you speak of eating roast beef as you would be to hear a Chinaman lamenting the absence of roast dog. Drinking whisky or wine they would regard much as we regard the taking of opium. As for tobacco smoking, it would appear to them to be a foolish and unclean habit. As it *is*." And Mr. Fry produced his snuff box and took a pinch.

"Hah! I say, dash it all, look here," said the General, stopping abruptly and turning to his companions, "this is becoming noxious. I'm not asleep, am I? Jorkle, I'm not asleep?"

"I shouldn't like to risk an opinion," said Mr. Jorkle. "What do you think about *me?*"

"I've always found you particularly wide awake," answered the General. "What I want to know is, am I awake myself? I don't think I could dream such an excellent vegetable curry, and I couldn't dream *you*, Jorkle. Look here, what are the odds against Blow-the-Man-Down for the Derby?"

"Six to four," said Mr. Jorkle, briskly; "how did Spanish pig iron close last night?"

"Three-sixteenths down, and still sluggish," said the General, without hesitation. "What about Liver Pill Consolidated?"

"Fitful, with a tendency upwards," said Mr. Jorkle.

"We are *not* asleep," cried the General, "and the prima donna at Covent Garden *does* make hearthrugs, and the man who mends lightning rods *is* married to a purple-eyed Venus; and the population of Manchester are all vegetarians and non-smokers, and teetotalers who don't know the meaning of the word 'damn.' I begin to think Mr. Fry's right: this is not conjuring, it's magic!"

"Perhaps," said Mr. Jorkle, grumpily, "but all the same I should like to ask Mr. Fry some questions."

"I shall be delighted to answer them, sir," said the wizard; "but, as it is now a quarter to two, I would suggest that we wait until after the concert. That avenue of red and white thorn trees, on the left, leads to the great square, called Fountain Square. Let us make haste."

As the three turned into the lane of scented hawthorns, some distant bells broke out into a joyous, silvery peal.

CHAPTER THREE
THE FESTIVAL

AVE you ever seen anything like this? If you have it must have been in your dreams." The wizard addressed himself to the General; he had already given up the other man as hopeless in his philistinism.

The three stood at the entrance to Fountain Square, observing the scene—each through the lens of his own personality.

"No," said the General, "I have never seen anything like this, even in a dream. Paris—no! Vienna—no! It's not quite English, and it's not quite foreign; it's neither ancient nor modern. Hah! It's a most surprising, interesting place, begad! Hah! hum! hah!"

"There's no traffic," said Mr. Jorkle, sulkily; "it's like a playground."

The three stood looking on. The great square presented an animated picture of rich colour, and noble form, and eager, happy human life. The place was a garden: a garden of green lawns, and bright spring flowers, and sparkling fountains, and stately trees—a garden surrounded by marble palaces, and canopied by a blue and smokeless sky. Here

the people—the beautiful, brave, impossible people—gathered in their thousands, walking, lounging, laughing, talking, as though the square were occupied solely by troops of friends.

It was at the people the General looked with the keenest interest; and as he looked he frowned. The wizard noticed it directly.

"Yes," he said, answering the half-formed, unspoken thought, "yes, General, you are right; we are outclassed. Our racial pride may resent the fact, but it is there. We have never seen a people so physically handsome, so vigorous. We have never seen such manly men, such womanly women. We have never seen a people so intelligent, so fearless, so free. You are a judge of such things. How say you?"

Hah!" replied the General. "They do look beastly fit and jolly."

"Gentlemen," said the wizard, "the point I wish to press home to your minds is the fact that these people are *happy*. They are happy, happy, happy!"

"They are fine animals, I admit," said Mr. Jorkle, "but they seem to me to be dressed too gaudily."

"Gaudily!" cried the wizard.

"Gaudy? No," said the General. "They are dressed perfectly, by George! Hah, I've never seen people dressed so well, nor so well groomed and set up, not a crowd, don't you know. The clothes are awfully jolly, begad; and—hah—there's men and women inside the clothes, sir. Look at those fellows; what Grenadiers they'd make! Look at the women,

Jorkle. Gad, sir, the women are a—er—a revelation! They are the kind of women we've been looking for all our lives, sir. Hah! Hang it all! Yes." The General frowned and twisted his moustache.

"General," said the wizard, "you have hit the bull's-eye. These are the most womenly women our earth has yet borne. They are better than beautiful. Look at their faces. They have clear skins; clean, firm, and gentle mouths; eyes full of courage and loving kindness; hair like the glory of night and day. You might truly say of any one of these, 'her face is like the Milky Way in the sky, a meeting of gentle lights without a name.' What is your opinion, Mr. Jorkle?"

"My dear sir," answered the great financier, coldly, "I have not studied the subject. I have had something more important to do. And at *our* time of life, Mr. Fry, feminine beauty is a closed book."

"I'm damned if it is," quoth the General.

The wizard took a pinch of snuff. "Let us go to the concert," he said.

The concert hall was circular in form. The seats, placed in concentric crescents, from the bow of the orchestra and stage, rose in a gradual and unbroken slope from the level of the floor to the great window which ran like a broad jewelled belt of light completely round the walls. The hall contained ten thousand chairs, and every seat was occupied.

The wizard led the way down the wide central aisle, almost to the stage, where he turned, so as to face the audience. "Gentle-

men," he said, smiling, "I have ventured to take a slight liberty, which I hope you will condone. In order that we may be able to observe freely, and to converse freely upon all we see and hear, I have—ah—presumed so far as to disembody myself and you. We are, therefore, for the present, invisible, inaudible, and intangible. The advantages of this arrangement are obvious."

The wizard produced his snuff box, and looked inquiringly at his companions.

Mr. Jorkle swelled, frowned, and glowered through his gold-rimmed glasses. The General drew himself up very straight, stared very hard, coughed, and said: "Hah! Confound it, sir, you don't stick at trifles."

"It is nothing," said the wizard; "a wave of the hand will put it right, and it enables us to look at the people and to talk about them without being rude. I hope you do not object."

"I—er—I don't know that I wish to stare at people," said Mr. Jorkle, "and—er—had my consent been asked I should decidedly have declined to be—er—disembodied. Of course, the—er—the arrangement is quite temporary."

"Look here, dash it all," said the General, "are we to understand that we are a couple of demnition ghosts?"

"That *is* the idea," answered the wizard, calmly.

"Then—hah—it seems to me," said the General, his eyes hardening and his figure stiffening, "that—hah——" But he here became conscious that he was standing close to one of the most superlatively beautiful women he had

ever seen, and after a few more hahs and hums, the cold light faded out of his eyes, and he concluded rather lamely: "Hah, it seems to me, Jorkle, that the—hah—situation has something to—hah—recommend it."

Mr. Jorkle shrugged his shoulders, and the wizard bowed. "For instance," said the latter, "I being invisible and inaudible to these people, can ask you to observe their faces, and especially the faces of the women——"

"You seem to be vastly interested in the women," remarked Mr. Jorkle.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the General. "I've noticed that, Jorkle. Ha! ha! Our friend the magician is quite a dog, begad! Hah! By Jove!"

The wizard tapped his snuff box and smiled inscrutably. "I'm afraid," he said, "that you have not *quite* caught the idea, gentlemen. I wish you to observe the women with especial care, because in attempting to understand these impossible people we shall find the women of the utmost importance. You smile, General; but my purpose is deeply serious, I assure you."

"Hah! Of course, of course," said the General, smiling more than ever. "Hah, an old colonel of mine, when I was a subaltern, once pointed out a sentry to some of us youngsters. Hah! He said: 'There's a real soldier, gentlemen, there's a clean, smart soldier, properly drilled, and properly dressed. Hah! That man's a picture. If I had a cup of coffee and a biscuit I could sit and look at that man all day.' Hah! Dash it all, Fry, I feel

exactly like old Squaretoes. I could stand and look at these ladies all night, dammit, and never ask for a coffee or biscuit at all. Hah! by George, sir, they are worth it! Ha, ha, ha! Sly dog, sly dog!"

The wizard contracted his eyes until they were mere specks of fire. "Very good," he said, "that is what I ask; but there is no need to make a night of it." Then, turning to Mr. Jorkle, he said: "You will notice, sir, I think, that the faces of these ladies are, as it were, illuminated by intelligence and kindness. They remind me of the 'Shining Ones' in Bunyan's dream. High intelligence, sweet goodwill, look frankly from their wonderful eyes. The lady just before us, whose charms caused the General to change front just now,"—the wizard's eyes twinkled—"may be taken as a type. Her beauty is suffused with a kind of tender graciousness. Like all the women in this impossible country, she is enfolded in love, and crowned with honour. *That* is what I want you to observe, sir. The women here have a new atmosphere, an atmosphere of sweetness and *light*."

"Yes, sir," cried a brisk voice, and Light appeared.

"My good lad, I'm sorry," said Mr. Fry, "I did not call you. I mentioned your name by chance."

"Very good, sir," said Light, and vanished.

"Hah! that chap Light of yours," said the General, "is rather — hah — sudden. Hah! almost jumpy, begad!"

"You will soon get used to him, General,"

said the wizard. "Ah, here is the conductor. Tut! *Light!*"

"Sir."

"A programme. Thank you. The concert, gentlemen," said the wizard, coolly, as he unfolded the programme, "is in honour of the spring. It opens with a Spring Song, for band and chorus, and I see there is a solo by Miss Dorothy Suthers, the lady who makes the hearthrugs. And—here she comes."

The soloist came forward and made a profound curtsey, smiling upon the vast audience with the bright, pleased look of a child amongst very dear and familiar friends. In response to her obeisance all the men in the hall rose and bowed, while the women touched their lips with their right hands, and then lightly extended their right arms. This was the regular form of welcome when a lady was the performer. There was no applause.

Turning, after a look of surprise at the strange formality, the General regarded the young singer with keen interest. Miss Dorothy Suthers was a young and beautiful brunette, rosy and dimpled, with hair like black floss silk, pouting lips as red as haws, and the soft eloquent brown eyes of a gazelle. She wore a dress of amber silk with crimson bows, and a handsome belt of silver, cunningly engraved.

"Phew!" said the General, "what a little gem she is!"

"She is," said the wizard, "a sweet bouquet of all the pretty loves and delicate graces. I could find in my heart to steal her."

"She has an eye that would charm a duck off the water, by George!" said the General.

"I begin to think——" Mr. Jorkle began; but the General said: "Dont; don't begin it at your time of life, Jorkle." And then the conductor lifted his long white hand, and the music commenced.

"Do you like music, General?" the wizard asked.

"Hah! oh, yes," said the General. "Hah! it's all right, don't you know."

"Oh," said the wizard. "It is all right? I see. And you, Mr. Jorkle?"

"I don't object to it, in moderation," replied that great man; "but I am not exactly musical."

"Not exactly! H'm!" said the wizard. "Then we need not stay; but I should like to hear the opening of the Spring Song, and that lovely child's solo."

"Why," Mr. Jorkle exclaimed, "nearly half the orchestra are women!"

"Why not?" said the wizard. "You will remember that Miss Lascelles told us she played in the band. Ah! there she is, flushed with music, and wreathed in smiles."

While Mr. Fry was speaking the solo began. Out of the soft pleading of the strings and cooing of the reeds welled up a sudden, passionate, delicious gush of song:

> Under the greenwood tree
> Who loves to lie with me,
> And turn his merry note
> Unto the sweet bird's throat.

Then, as the violins worked themselves up

into an eager hurry, and the reeds gurgled and warbled, the voice increased in volume, filling the great hall with its joyous challenge.

Come hither, come hither, come hither!

And as the basses boomed and the horns awoke, the chorus of three hundred lusty and fresh voices took up the refrain:

Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather.

The three were now well up the aisle, almost at the door. They paused to hear that storm of joyous song, and to wonder at the voice of the mat-maker ringing through it all like the sound of a silver trumpet.

"By—*Jove!*" cried the General, "what a *ripping* voice!"

"And do you mean to tell me, Mr. Fry," said Mr. Jorkle, "that this young person does not get paid for singing?'

"Certainly, sir," answered the wizard, "she is not paid."

Mr. Jorkle shrugged his shoulders disgustedly. "Then," said he, "what does she do it for?"

The wizard laughed. "Upon my word, Mr. Jorkle," said he, "that is a quite surprising and unforeseen question. What does the skylark sing for?"

"Hah!" said the General, "the little beggar sings because he's glad, I suppose. I sing in my bath, for some such reason. Hah! but nobody would think of paying me. Jorkle, do

you sing when you have made a particularly wicked and successful deal?"

"Well," said the wizard, "shall we go? There is a choral symphony called 'Evolution,' which is very fine, I hear. The first part is called 'The Realms of Chaos and Old Night,' and was composed by the great Russian, Vronsky; the second part, called 'War,' is by the French composer, Metin; the third part is by an Englishwoman, Miss Mildred Thompson. But, perhaps, Mr. Jorkle is anxious to get to the heckling."

"I'm not in a hurry," said Mr. Jorkle, "but I have an important appointment in town to-night, and must not be late."

"Have no fear, sir; have no fear," said the wizard. "We are working by one of our best chronometer repeater Dream Watches. This watch"—he took from his pocket a large white-faced, antique gold watch—"is one of our best lines. It keeps dream time, enables one to serve seven years penal servitude between two snores, or ride five hundred miles in a runaway railway engine and fall over a bottomless precipice while a fly is walking across one's nose. A most useful instrument. We sell a great many of them for presents. Hah! Excuse me. I will just embody myself for a moment."

They had come out into the corridor, and a tall, fair lady was walking slowly towards them. She was dressed in black: dressed as ladies were dressed in London—their London. She was beautiful, and possessed of great charm; but her gait was languid, and her air listless, or bored.

Mr. Fry walked straight up to her, raising his hat and holding out his hand, and said: "You here, Adelaide! What can have brought you?"

"I wanted to see you," said the lady; "are you sorry I have come? Are you tired of me?"

"Nonsense!" answered the wizard. "You know I was always pleased with you. I like you better than any of the others."

The lady smiled, rather sadly, perhaps, and said: "How sweet of you. You spoiled me. You know you did. You always spoil your girls. But I am *very* fond of you, for all that." She laid her daintily gloved hand upon the old man's arm, and looked at him affectionately.

"I'll tell you what," said the General to Mr. Jorkle, "we seem to be devilishly out of it. Hah! You'll notice that old Simmery Axe hasn't—hah—embodied *us*. It's not—hah—quite playing the game. Hah! At the same time—hah—as we can see and hear, we had better walk on. Hey?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Jorkle; "but, for a man of his years, I must say——"

"Hah! no," said the General, "I think you are off the wicket, Jorkle. The old witch doctor is not *that* sort. But I don't relish being left with the reserves when there's fun going on at the front, and—hah—by George, I won't stand any more of this disembodiment. Hah! Confound his impudence!"

The two walked to the end of the corridor, where, in a few minutes, the wizard joined them.

"I beg ten thousand pardons," he said, as he

came up. "Allow me." He made a couple of peculiar passes with his hands. "We are now re-embodied. I hope I have not kept you waiting long. It was rather—rather an unexpected meeting. The lady you saw me speak to is one of my heroines. Er—a while ago I used to write novels. That lady—Miss Adelaide Maitland—was in one of them, and it seems I have—I have, quite inadvertently, done her an injustice."

"In what way?" asked the General. "Well," said Mr. Fry, "I left off the story in such a way as to suggest that Adelaide would probably marry a Mr. Tennant. I did not exactly say so; but left the matter open. You follow?"

The General nodded and said, "Hah! yes."

"Well," the wizard went on, "it seems she did not want to marry at all, and that she regarded Tennant as a good deal of a bore. Consequently the poor child has no future. Absolutely none."

"But there are plenty of men in the world; hang it!" said the General.

Mr. Fry rubbed his nose in a perplexed way. "No," he said, "not in her world. But I'll write another book, and let her reappear. That's only right. The worst of it is she wants me to alter her; and I hate altering my people. She says I made her too sweet. She says I idealise too much, and that her own sweetness is positively cloying to her. She is really a charming girl: I suppose you saw that?"

"Hah! Dash it all! that was our share of it," said the General.

"My dear sir," exclaimed the wizard, "I'm

sorry. I was rather thrown out, and forgot my manners. I'm very sorry—really."

"Sorry be hanged!" said the General, testily. "It isn't cricket."

The wizard laughed. "Well," he said, "we must try to do better next time. And now I must attend to Mr. Jorkle's questions. Light!"

"Sir!"

"Throw up a small pavilion of some kind in the beech wood. One of our magic card houses will do; and put decanters, cigars, and pipes: we may have a long sitting."

"Yes, sir."

"Gentlemen," said the wizard, "will you oblige me by turning round three times: like this. Thank you. There is our pavilion, in the green glade; you can just see it through the beeches. This is the wood we walked through before we entered Manchester."

CHAPTER FOUR
THE PAVILION

UR little card pavilion, gentlemen," said the wizard, with one of his gracious gestures of the hand, "built with a pack of our magic playing cards. The exterior walls, and roof, are made by the backs of the cards. How does the design appeal to you? It is quaint and pleasing, I think. I like the way the maroon and purple are woven together, and the dim thread of gold, playing at hide-and-seek in the pattern, like a merry thought in a grave discourse. I had the design from an old Florentine who was burnt for heresy. He is a very courteous and tasteful spectre, who haunts old palaces, suggesting to his patients nothing more unpleasant than a kind of warm and mellow melancholy, such as belongs to the frail perfume of *pot-pourri*, or the rustle of autumn leaves. Hem! The faces of the cards, as you see, make the inner walls and ceiling. I like the idea of centreing the court cards at intervals. They suggest the panelled portraits of old queens and kings. The ceiling is set diagonally, you will notice. The floor is of knaves and fives, and we use the ace of spades for a table. Please sit down. These card chairs are strong

and resilient. Ah, I see Light has forgotten to place me a churchwarden, and he has been called away. He has, in fact, gone on a business trip into the seventeenth century to clear up the origin of the haunting of Fitzhauberk Castle. It seems there is a little dispute between two highly reputable and gifted phantoms upon a matter of succession."

The wizard coolly drew a long clay pipe down his sleeve. "Now, gentlemen," he said, "there is tobacco in the inexhaustible jar on the table; there are cigars in the arms of the brown clay god; and the fat black flagon will yield you any kind of liquor you wish to pour out If you will excuse me, I will take tea, since I am to be heckled."

The three sat down; Mr. Fry and Mr. Jorkle facing each other; the General, seated at the table, making the third point of a triangle, as it might have been, and, indeed, was, planned for a triangular duel.

Mr. Jorkle pursed up his lips and pondered heavily. Mr. Fry leaned back in his chair, crossed his legs, and puffed slowly at his pipe.

Now, the General was not an imaginative man, or, perhaps, his imagination was somewhat atrophied from lack of exercise, but as he sat looking from the wizard to Mr. Jorkle, and from Mr. Jorkle to the wizard, he experienced a slight thrill, not unlike the thrill of expectation before a battle.

Having in his time enjoyed a considerable variety of bloodshed, and confronted antagonists of many creeds and colours, he was a keen judge of fighting men and their qualities. And

as he compared the pompous, lumbering guinea pig with the lean, keen, alert little wizard, he curled his long moustaches, and slightly raised his heavy white eyebrows.

The wizard's figure was relaxed and still, his hand lay loosely and lazily over the arm of the chair, his face was wrinkled in a smile of satirical good humour; but his half-closed eyes gleamed with a strange fierceness, as they watched intently the man before him.

The General thought first of the eyes of an owl he had once seen in the act of killing a mouse. Then he remembered a certain puissant master-at-arms from Seville, whose ferocity and power were wrapped softly and elegantly in folds of grace and stripes of humour, as the soul and sinews of a panther in its satin skin.

"Looks just like that devil Trejada," was the General's mental comment, "and, gad, if Jorkle isn't spry he'll be through him before he can say damn."

"I suppose we are to assume, sir," said Mr. Jorkle, in his most ponderously important board-room manner, "that this place we are in, or seem to be in, is a Socialist state or city?"

"It is a kind of commune," said the wizard.

"Ah! then the first questions I shall ask will concern the relations of the sexes: the marriage laws, the laws of divorce, and the control and education of children." Mr. Jorkle put up his glasses and looked severely at Mr. Fry.

The wizard sat motionless and silent for a few seconds. Then he said: "Certainly, Mr. Jorkle. General, *may* I borrow your hat?

Thank you." He placed the General's silk hat upon the table, waved his pipe over it, and, lifting it up, disclosed a sculptured group of three figures in marble.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Fry, "I am glad Mr. Jorkle has begun with the position of woman, because that is the beginning of the whole matter, and almost the end. If you will look at this statuary group you will see that it represents a mother and her son and daughter. The son is a boy of, say, fifteen; the daughter perhaps two years younger. It is a great conception, greatly carried out; the figures are noble types. That, however, is by the way. This is a model of the colossal work which stands in the great Rose Garden at Hoxton—not our Hoxton. This group, which was executed by the famous sculptor, Denis Maxted, has a deep and sacred significance for the English people—the impossible people of whom we are now to talk. Well, gentlemen, can you guess the name of the woman—the mother in that composition?"

"You say there is no queen," said the General. "Hah! it isn't Charity. No—I—hah—give it up."

"And I also," said Mr. Jorkle.

"That figure," said Mr. Fry, "is Britannia!"

"Britannia!"

"She has, you see, no helmet, no trident, no lion. Britannia does not rule, nor menace, now; she protects, she cherishes. She is the emblem of England, and you see she is a woman, and a mother. She protects and cherishes—the children."

"Ha! very charming, and poetical, and—er—all that," said Mr. Jorkle, "but not explicit."

The wizard resumed his seat and his pipe. "I venture to infer," he said, mildly, "that you speak in the interests of morality."

"You are quite right, sir," said Mr. Jorkle, with an ominous little nod, "quite right."

The wizard took a few puffs at his pipe, then went on in a very soft and quiet voice: "It does you great credit, Mr. Jorkle, that you retain so pure and unselfish an interest in morality"—(puff, puff)—"coming, as you do, from such a barbarous—and basely immoral—country as the England we know."

"I hope, sir," said Mr. Jorkle, "that in this Utopia they have not improved upon our moral rags and tatters by—er—simply going naked—and unashamed."

The wizard smiled, then said, slowly: "The foundation and pattern of this State, sir, is the family."

Mr. Jorkle started and frowned. "Go on, sir, go on," he said, "and be explicit, pray."

"The heart of this civilisation," Mr. Fry continued, "is the family; the heart of the family is the woman—the mother. When *these* English speak of England as the motherland they use a true figure of speech. When the Englishman of our England speaks of the motherland he lies."

"Hum! And about those marriage laws?" said Mr. Jorkle.

"As I said before," the wizard answered, "there are no laws here. But there are customs.

One of these customs is the custom of marriage —the custom of strict monogamy."

"And—er—suppose a man gets sick of his wife," said Mr. Jorkle, "does he leave her?"

"Ah! you are thinking of our England," said Mr. Fry, "and the system of marital slave-owning. Here if a husband showed his wife that he had ceased to love her she would be likely to leave him."

"And what becomes of the children?" cried Mr. Jorkle, triumphantly.

"The children," said Mr. Fry, "until they are of age to act for themselves, belong to the mother."

"The devil they do," said the General. "Hah! What do the men say to that?"

"The men say that it is quite just and expedient," said the wizard. "This may seem strange to you, because in our England we do not reverence nor honour women."

"Oh, come, dash it all, that's going too far," the General protested.

"Excuse me," Mr. Jorkle struck in, "suppose a man leaves his wife, or that she leaves him, is he at liberty to take another wife?"

"Do you mean may he marry again?" said the wizard.

"Yes. Or—yes, of course," Mr. Jorkle answered.

The wizard smiled. "It was," said he, "a woman, the excellent Mrs. Glasse, who said, 'first catch your hare.' You must not forget that the position of woman here in no way resembles her position with us. Here if a husband leaves his wife he finds it very difficult

to find another. The women here are very proud, their ideal of purity is very high, and they are completely independent. No woman here marries for bread. No woman dreads a future of solitary indigence. There is no poverty in this country. Every wife is economically independent of her husband. Imagine, then, a divorced husband going out tainted and a failure to pay court to one of these free women. The maidens here set their entreatments at a higher rate than a demand to parley. They are free. They are men's equals. They are honoured, and it is a case of *noblesse oblige*. But, indeed, it is not often that marriage is a failure amongst these people. When a couple do discover that they are ill-sorted they may part; but generally they make the best of it, for the children's sake. But woman or man divorced has but a poor chance of a second marriage."

"But such marriages *do* occur?" said Mr. Jorkle.

Mr. Fry nodded. "Sometimes," he said.

"And what then, sir, is the fate of the children?"

"I will ask you, because it is very necessary to ask you," said Mr. Fry, "to remember what in our country would be the fate of the children in similar circumstances. And I will remind you that here no sordid, miserable money troubles exist. The children can find homes in a hundred households. They can take food anywhere. Every house is open, every table free to them, and, still more happily, every heart is open to them also. No child here is

denied food, no child is denied instruction, no child is denied love. Children here are not regarded as a burden, but as a blessing. There is scarcely a parent in this beautiful, impossible land who would not rush open-armed to succour any child who needed a mother and a home. Picture to yourself this state of things, and then"—the wizard paused, and, with a glance like the thrust of a rapier, concluded, "and then, in the interest of morality, Mr. Jorkle, remember London—our London: the moral London for the preservation of whose purity you are so concerned."

"Yes, yes," said the financier, "but I am not yet satisfied as to the perfection of this place."

"Perfection!" said the wizard. "Is there any question of perfection? Your idea, I take it, was to show that this place was morally worse than our England. If I show it to be morally very much better, I submit that you are answered."

"Come," said Mr. Jorkle, with a forensic air, "what about free love in this moral state?"

"All love here is free; that is why the relations of the sexes are so happy and so pure."

"But I always understood," the magnate persisted, "that under Socialism free love would ride rough-shod over every moral restraint, and that the family ideal would be destroyed. Do you mean to say it is not so here?"

"Some Socialists may have given cause for such a fear," said the wizard, "but there are few English Socialists who would endorse such extravagant ideas. And I have shown you, not

only that no such state of things exists here, but also why it does not exist."

"I'm afraid," said Mr. Jorkle, "that I do not quite follow."

"But," said the wizard, "you understand my repeated assertions that the women here are entirely free, and are held in honour and in reverence. How, then, could a state of immorality be possible?"

"Hah! I must say the men here seem to be devilishly gallant," remarked the General.

The wizard looked at him in a peculiar way. He seemed amused, but not pleased. "My dear sir," he said, "in using the word 'gallant' you seem to indicate that you have not fully understood the situation of affairs in this country."

"Well," said the General, "I am—hah—anxious to learn, don't you know."

"It always seems to me a very odd thing," said the wizard, "that in our highly moral and cultured society if a man speaks reverently or affectionately of women his meaning is monstrously misconstrued. I believe that the woman who stands nearest to the general masculine imagination is Aspasia. I remember once remarking that sex was the greatest fact in human life, and being told by the educated yahoo to whom I was speaking that it was not so important as hunger. 'For,' said that extraordinary person, 'to a hungry man the naked Venus herself might appeal in vain.' Are *you* thinking of Venus, General?"

"Hah! Confound it all, no," said the General, "but of what the dickens are you speaking?"

The wizard laughed. "Upon my word, it *is* Venus who is standing in your light, and in Mr. Jorkle's light also. Why, gentlemen, our barbarous society has so confused you that it is necessary to explain to you the meaning of some of the commonest words in our tongue."

"We await instruction, sir," said Mr. Jorkle.

"Good," said the wizard, "when we speak of woman we mean woman, and not *a* woman —of the least admirable type. For sex includes motherhood, sisterhood, maidenhood. It includes the holy relationships of sister and brother, of father and son, of children and mother, of husband and wife. Don't forget, Mother, gentlemen; don't forget Mother. These people have remembered Mother, and have seated her upon the throne."

"You don't mean to say that woman wears the breeches, dammit?" exclaimed the General.

"My dear General," laughed the wizard, "you really are magnificent."

"Then we are to understand that no such thing as immorality exists in this wonderful paradise?" said Mr. Jorkle.

"You are to understand, gentlemen," said the wizard, "that this is the most moral people the world has ever known, and you are to understand that this is so because woman here is wholly free, and truly honoured."

"Hah! Honour bright?" asked the General.

"It is the simple truth," replied the wizard, "and now, allow me to make a few comments upon the moral state of *our* England."

"Oh, well," said the General, with an eloquent shrug.

"In our highly moral and civilised country, as we know it, to our shame," said the wizard, "woman is generally regarded, and treated, as an inferior. Amid our mockery of bows and compliments, we tell her to her face that she cannot reason, that she has a weak sense of honour, that she is frivolous, inconstant, vain, and incapable of self-government. In our highly moral England, for whose purity Mr. Jorkle is so jealous, we hang women, we imprison them, we dress them as felons, and treat them as brutes. In our moral empire you may see women, old and young, working like beasts of burden. In many of our shops, and factories, and theatres, the women must sacrifice their honour to live. I need not remind you of the condition of the London streets at night. You have eyes and you have seen. But have you seen women and girls working in gangs in the fields, like slaves? Have you seen a grey-haired matron carrying sixty pounds of chain on her shoulders? Have you seen pregnant women at the anvil making nails? Have you seen women carrying heavy loads of clay upon their backs? Have you seen the condition of women tramping the roads, rotting as paupers in our accursed workhouses, begging in the streets? Do you know the endless drudgery and abasement of the many thousands of overworked and underpaid general servants in our happy England? Do you know the rascally rates of wages allowed to women and girls in the majority of our industries? Are you conscious, in your moral zeal for the status of women under Socialism, that there are millions

of English women existing in ignorance, in degradation, in semi-starvation? Have you ever studied the highly moral statistics of drunkenness, illiteracy, disease, overcrowding, crime, and prostitution in our glorious and highly moral Empire? You know, of course, a good deal about these things. You know more than you dare to confess. And you come here"—the little man suddenly turned a blazing look upon Mr. Jorkle—"and have the effrontery to catechise me upon the moral condition of the Socialist State."

The wizard relighted his pipe, and said: "You ask me about the status of women here. I tell you. I tell you; and mark it well, that in this country there is no such thing as an untaught, poor, or degraded woman; there is no such thing as a courtesan; there is no such thing as the sale and barter of women's flesh and women's honour; there is not a woman tramp, beggar, or slave; there is not a woman destitute of home, of hope, of love. Ah! and I will add, gentlemen, that there is not a man who, could he hear of the dastardly, brutal, and immoral state of our England, would not loathe us as a nation of unclean and blackguardly savages. I hope, gentlemen, that I make my meaning plain."

"Hah! you certainly do," said the General, laughing, "and—hah—now I am wondering, don't you know, how you have rid these people of all their—hah—natural cussedness."

"They have simply rid themselves of the unnatural cussedness which has made, and still keeps, *our* England what she is," said the

wizard; "and now, gentlemen, let us go and visit some of these people in their homes."

"Hah!" said the General, "with pleasure. Hah! This *must* be a demnition dream. Hah! Jorkle, if you had not such clumping feet I would ask you to tread lightly on my gouty toe. Hah! Dash it all! It's—hah—it's marvellous, don't you know, and—hah—that sort of thing."

"Seems to me," said Mr. Jorkle, with surly rudeness, "that it's a question of facts."

"My good sir," said the wizard, with a kind of smiling sternness, "if it is unwise to be rude to the equator, it is sheer folly to beard a sorcerer in his den. But you shall test the facts, and I will restrain my professional inclination to transform you into an earwig. Puff!"

The wizard gave a sudden whiff of his breath, and the card house fell with a clatter about their ears.

CHAPTER FIVE MOTHER

HE three left the wood by the path they had taken in the morning; but after crossing the bridge where they had seen the blue heron, Mr. Fry turned from the high road and led the way through the unfenced orchards. Here, as they walked over the plushy moss, on which the fluctuating lights and shadows wrought living patterns in green and blue and russet and gold, the proud piping of a blackbird from the crown of a tall poplar was checked by a sudden peal, like the clashing ripple of sweet shrill bells, of children's laughter.

"Look!" said the wizard.

"Listen!" said the General.

In the branchy primrose-spangled orchard, where the gnarled trunks gleamed like oxidised silver, and the massed blossoms were defined in delicate pink loveliness against the glistening purple sky, a troop of little children were at play.

In front strutted a sturdy, black-eyed urchin, bearing a flowered spray of thorn, after him marched, two-and-two, some three score boys and girls. They were bare-headed and bare-legged, were dressed in gaily-coloured spring clothing, and bore themselves with a mock

solemnity and parody of pomp, of which their elastic step and laughing eyes made the drollest paradox. As they marched they sang, to an air that had pleased twenty generations of little people:

Who shall walk in sunny ways,
  Gay with love and roses;
She whose mirth makes winter days
  Bright as summer posies.

Gird her waist and crown her hair,
  With proud silver lilies,
Throne her in a lordly chair
  Of golden daffodillies.

Little men and little maids,
  Take your merry play-time;
Merry are the orchard glades
  In the Merry May-time.

Sing the song the throstle sings
  When the dew is falling;
Dance like elves in fairy rings
  When the Spring is calling.

"Hah! Reminds me of the time when I got my jacket dusted for playing with the shepherd's children on Bideford Green," remarked the General.

"And does it remind you of the slum children in the stifled warrens of Shantytown East, Mr. Jorkle?" asked the wizard.

"No," replied that gentleman: "what it does remind me of is my intention to ask about the education of children in this—er—State."

"Ask, then," said the wizard.

"Well, to begin at the beginning," said Mr. Jorkle, "what kind of elementary schools have they here?"

The wizard smiled. "They have none at all," said he.

Mr. Jorkle fairly gasped. "Do you mean that the children are not educated?" he exclaimed.

"On the contrary, they are beautifully educated."

"Although there are no schools!"

"*Because* there are no schools."

"How, then, are they educated?"

"My dear sir, before I tell you how they are, I must tell you how they are not educated."

"You have my best attention, sir."

"Well, they are not educated as children in our England are educated, because in the two Englands the ideals of life are very different, and the end in view not being the same, the means are not the same, naturally."

"And pray in what does this great difference consist?"

"People in our England are split up into classes, into religious sects, into political parties; and then our England is devoted to empire and to trade. But here they have no classes, no religious sects, no political parties, no empire, and no trade."

"And what is the positive to which all these negatives point?"

"Well, and in our England we want the children loaded with the special party bias; and each one of the two-and-seventy jarring sects hankers for the power to give a particular religious squint to their poor little souls, and then, for the sake of trade and the empire, their

poor little minds have to be drugged and shackled, so that they shall be diligent and submissive workers, or masterful and ambitious rulers, according to the station of life into which it has pleased our peculiarly British Providence to drop them."

"Well, well, well! But what about these children here?"

"And in our England we have the children regimented in educational barracks, and taught the educational goose-step, according to code, by machine-made scholastic drill-sergeants, in order that the dears may be as much alike as possible, and shall obey orders with mechanical docility and precision in the great national campaigns for trade and empire."

"Yes, yes! And here?"

"Here they want the children to be happy and healthy, and to grow up into good and capable women and men."

"Therefore?"

"Therefore they have burnt the code, dismantled the barracks, discharged the drill sergeant, and—gone back to *mother*."

"To mother?"

"Yes. Mother is politics, religion, drill sergeant, elementary school, and many much better things, all rolled into one."

"Do you mean to say these children are left to the teaching of a parcel of women?"

"Happily, yes. What are all elementary schools but substitutes, and bad substitutes, for mother? It is only in societies where the vanity of castes, the bitterness of sects, and the greed of trade have made drudges or toys

of the women that educational barracks and scholastic drill sergeants are tolerated."

"But I thought the Socialist idea——"

"Ah, you have been importing Socialist ideas from Germany. There are, I believe, some doctrinaire German Socialists who would take the children from their mothers and regiment and goose-step them into battalions and divisions of uniform citizens; but in this country they prefer to put their trust in mother."

"Mother must be devilishly well-informed and clever," said the General.

"Sir," the wizard answered, "there is no wisdom so deep as love."

"Oh!" said Mr. Jorkle, "and what do these wonderful mothers teach their children?"

"A very great deal that the wisest minister of education never got into a code. For one cannot catch sunbeams in traps."

"I'm afraid you are—er—too romantic. Do you suggest—er—to *me*, that a comprehensive and systematic elementary education can be replaced by the smatterings and pettings of a woman?" Mr. Jorkle grew quite hot and red with scornful indignation. But the wizard answered in his usual dry and imperturbable manner:

"Indeed, that *is* the idea. But what is it, my dear sir, that *you* suggest to *me?* You have been officially concerned with education, I believe?"

"I have that honour."

"You have that honour. And do you suggest to me that the flower-sweet and heavenly-wise

mother, whose breast is the cradle of all womanhood and manhood, whose immeasurable love and matchless intuition win the reverence of the wise, shall be driven out, with all her healing tenderness and purifying graces, that her children may be delivered up to *you?*"

"I suggest—er—that the proper educational authorities, the—er—trained capacity of—er—the specialist must excel the—ah—irregular sentimentality—of—in short, my experience of mothers is that they are quite unqualified to teach."

"*Your* experience of mothers. In *our* England. Yes."

"Upper-class women are too frivolous and idle; lower-class women are too ignorant I know nothing of the Utopian women here; but ours are hopeless. Er, I cannot endorse your opinion of the sex. What do *you* say, General Storm?"

"Hah! My mother was a good woman," said the General.

"I give thanks," said the wizard, "that we have many such, even in our England."

"Well"—Mr. Jorkle shrugged his shoulders —"let us descend to vulgar detail. What do these wonderful mothers teach their wonderful children?"

"Primarily the mother teaches her children to be truthful, and clean, and kind. With kisses, and songs, and stories, with silver precepts and a golden example, with gentleness, sagacity, and affection, she makes them happy and good, so that in their merry voices and

shining faces one discerns the sparkling signs that they are well-mothered bairns."

"Yes. But——"

"What of book learning? Mother teaches the rudiments. First of all the three R's. All these children read and write beautifully. How many of our children can? As for mere arithmetic, it has been much simplified by the disuse of money. There are no money sums now to worry little heads. The children learn a few simple rules."

"And is that all?"

"Oh, no. Nearly every child is taught to draw, to model, or to carve, or to do all those things; and every child is taught to sing, and to dance, and to play some instrument. This applies to the young children. Most of them can sing and play, and dance and draw and carve, and can read and write the universal language, as well as English, before they are in their teens. They pick up other things as well: botany, astronomy, geography, gardening — many things. And, of course, their physical training is attended to. There father helps. The children, boys and girls, all swim, and row, and play at cricket and many other games."

"And when do they begin to work?"

"Oh, at different ages. Naturally they are eager to work before they are old enough to be indulged. But some are allowed to do a little work when they are thirteen; others a year or two later."

"Then they have actually no schooling?"

"Work, as, of course, you know, is educa-

tional. But there are some kinds of work that demand special knowledge. For instance, a boy who wishes to go in for architecture, or navigation, or engineering, needs to be more than a skilled mechanic, or mason, or what not. And to supply the necessary training there are schools and classes. They are all voluntary. For a boy who is learning to be a mason may not wish to be an architect. He may prefer to develop a taste for music, or painting, or mathematics. Well, he goes to the schools and studies these things. That is what I mean by saying that boys may begin work at thirteen. They really begin to learn to work. For no boy is allowed to do the work of a man. And you will find that work here is very light and pleasant. Nobody need work more than three or four hours a day, unless he wishes to."

"Do you mean to say some of the men work longer than they are compelled to work?"

"Why not? Do not thousands of men in our England work longer than they need to work? Do not you, for instance? Most men here work nearly twice the regulation time. But they often put in the extra hours at a different sort of work. You must understand that with these people work is a pleasure, not a task. And in all the higher arts and crafts the men get so interested in the work, and so enamoured of it, that it is not easy to drive them away from it. But this is a digression. We were speaking of education. The idea with these people is not to waste the time and powers of a girl or boy over the acquirement of useless knowledge. It would be folly to worry our

pretty mat-maker with chemistry or vulgar fractions. She makes mats, and excellent good mats, I'll dare warrant; but her soul is in her song."

"All very fine. But who discovers the bent of each child?"

"Why—mother. Who should be so competent?"

"But you say all the children learn to draw and to sing."

"I spoke generally. Of course, where a child shows no aptitude for one study another is substituted."

"But can all the mothers draw?"

"Oh, most of them. But, of course, where teachers are needed they can be had from the schools. Often enough the neighbouring families will club together for lessons. Then one of the parents or older children will direct the musical and art studies. Remember this is a nation of craftsmen, and artists, and musicians."

"And you mean to say that this loose system, or no system, works out satisfactorily?"

"It is not a loose system; it is a sound one. You will find, moreover, that although the children here are not perverted, and worried, and crammed, as they are with us, yet the men and women are infinitely better educated than ours. In our England they begin to forget just at the age when in this new England they begin to learn."

"Hah! How do you account for that?" asked the General.

"Why," said the wizard, "it's our ridiculous

system. We stuff a boy with scraps of mathematics, and history, and Latin, and Greek; and then send him into the vulgar scramble to scratch for a living on the commercial rubbish heap. The young man is so busy and so anxious over his business, and his future, that in a few years his expensive "education" has leaked away. But here a boy chooses his work and his studies. Perhaps he will be a shipwright. Well, he goes to his work without a scrap of anxiety as to his wages, or his situation, or his future, and he begins, outside his limited working hours, to learn to know or to learn to do the things which interest him.

For instance, there is Miss Hilda Parker, a very sweet girl friend of mine. She is a librarian, and for four hours a day she is in attendance at the library; but she is far better known as a painter of English landscape. She is a splendid artist; and in her spare time makes musical instruments and studies natural history. Her knowledge of moths and butterflies is wonderful; she is quite an authority. Yet she is only a girl. Or, take the case of Lascelles, who mends lightning rods. Now he is the brilliant Arthur Ballantyne Lascelles, about the finest novelist in this country. In the same way the Astronomer-General is a master of rose culture, and designer of tapestries and mosaic. Elizabeth Alison Groom, the leading authority on languages, didn't know a word except of English and Esperanto when she was nineteen. She has learnt it all since then, in the spare time when she was not doing repousse work in copper."

"And does she still punch copper?" asked the General.

"No," said the wizard; "her time is mostly occupied in consultations. She is in great demand on the Continent; but she does a little pottery work when she can, and it's certainly hard on her that she can get so little time for real happy work."

"And the lightning rod man," said the General, "is a literary man? Hah! That may somewhat account for the Venus. Hah! What sort of a fellow is he?"

"I don't know him," the wizard answered; "I've seen him on the cricket field. He goes in first for England."

"Hah! Good bat, hey?"

"Very fine. A good-looking man, too; tall and well-built. He has a big thing in off-drives, and cuts like William Gunn."

The General curled his moustaches. "Hah!" he said, "I should awfully like to see some cricket—*here*, don't you know."

"That isn't difficult to manage," answered the wizard; "they take their cricket very seriously," he added.

"So I should imagine, sir," Mr. Jorkle said, "so I should imagine."

"But they don't play bridge, nor gamble on the racecourse—*nor* the Stock Exchange," the wizard said, drily.

"Hum! I should like to talk to some of these angelic paragons," Mr. Jorkle observed.

"And so you shall," cried the wizard. "Look, there is a young man mowing a lawn; let us go and speak to him."

CHAPTER SIX
THE DUNCE

HE wizard stepped out between two scented cherries, and spoke to the brown-skinned mower: "Good day, friend; you have a pleasant task this pleasant day."

The young man stayed the scythe and stood up. He was lithe and well-looking, with merry blue eyes and crisp-curling brown hair.

"Yes, sir," he said, "mowing is happy work, and, as you say, it is a handsome, genial afternoon."

"And who," asked the wizard, "lives in that pretty, vine-covered house beyond the bee-hives?"

"A very dear friend of mine," the youth answered, "my sister Kate."

"And do you live with her?"

"No, sir. She is married. She is Mrs. Norris. Her husband is Mr. Joseph Norris, the tile painter. You may have heard of him; he is Assistant Astronomer-General."

"I have heard of him. He explained the nature of spiral nebulæ."

"Yes. Would you like to meet my sister, sir?"

"Very much, I thank you. But you have not introduced yourself."

"Oh, I'm Tom Thewlis, and nobody. I mean I'm only Kate's brother. But come this way, friends, my sister will be glad of a gossip."

The tall youth stalked across the lawn and through a quiet rose garden, followed by the three. When close to the house he shouted, "Kate!" and Kate appeared in the green twilight of the trellised porch: a living picture of happy womanhood, in a living frame of flowers. The General involuntarily exclaimed "Hah! Oh!" and turned it into a cough; and even Mr. Jorkle almost smiled. For Mrs. Norris was irresistible. It was not only her superlative prettiness that told; it was her charm: her radiant good humour, her glowing kindness, her transparent candour. Joy seemed to sparkle all about her, like spangles of sunlight on a lake. As for her beauty, its secret was one of light and colour. She was a symphony in red and brown. She had thick-clustered chestnut hair, laughing hazel eyes, arched brown eyebrows, a clear brown skin, ripe full lips, and a dimple in each rosy cheek. She was of medium height, wide-shouldered, deep-chested, with a full round throat; and her figure, for all its soft curves, suggested power: a happy, beneficent, tender strength.

Young Thewlis, who had anticipated the effect she would produce upon the visitors, smiled his satisfaction. "Kate," he said, "here are three strangers, who would like to rest and chat a while."

"Madam," said the wizard, "if we do not intrude, I should like my friends to see your house, and to have the pleasure of some little

conversation with you and your family." He then made the necessary introductions, and the hostess courteously ushered them into her home.

"You see, gentlemen," said the wizard, as they entered the sitting-room, "it is a good deal in the old English style; but with a difference. Open beams in the ceiling, panelled walls, polished oak floor. The window takes the whole south side, and is a deeply-curved bay, with a seat built in. Except the piano, the harp, and the chairs, there is no furniture. Only one picture, but a fine one. Ah! the corn lands at harvest time: all blue, and gold, and sunshine. Your painting, Mrs. Norris? No? The panels are decorated with paintings, mostly seas and clouds. Perhaps these are your work, madam?"

The hostess shook her curly head. "No, sir," she said, smiling, "I'm not clever at all. My husband painted two of the panels. The others were done by friends. The harvest picture was painted by Miss Marion Walker, and was given to me as a wedding present."

"Thank you," said the wizard; "I must tell you, gentlemen, that one cannot buy pictures here. One paints one's own, or gets them as presents. And, talking of presents, the most prized are those which are the handiwork of the donor. For instance, if a young man gives his sweetheart a bracelet or a belt, it is always one of his own make. Or he will give a book of his own binding, or a picture of his own painting, or what not. But the girl expects a present to mean some thought and labour expended for her sake. That is so, madam?"

"Of course," said Mrs. Norris.

"And, again," said the wizard, "these people like to do a great deal for themselves. All these chairs, I suppose, would be made by the family or friends. Look at the carving."

"It must be very expensive furniture," remarked Mr. Jorkle.

"Ah! In a sense," said the wizard. "But here things are made lovingly, and lastingly. These chairs will be sound and good two centuries hence. All work here is done well, and so is 'cheap' in the end. With us, as I need not remind you, it is otherwise."

"I understand, madam," said Mr. Jorkle, "that you educate your own children."

"I—oh, no," replied Mrs. Norris. "Of course, I teach them the simple things children should know. But one does not educate children. One nurses them, and spoils them."

"I'm—ha—afraid I don't understand," said the financier.

Mrs. Norris laughed. "I mean that one mothers them," she said, "that's all."

"Ha! But what, for instance, do you teach your own children?"

"Only what other mothers teach theirs. I should rather say they learn than that I teach."

"But what do you teach or they learn?"

"They learn to read and write, and to sing and play. And we tell them about the world, and the stars, so that they will know where they live. There is a great mechanical model of the solar system at the Town Hall. There they see the planets and the earth, and the sun,

and the moon. So they understand about the seasons and the tides, and all that. And we teach them to make a map of the house and garden, and then show them where London is, and where France and America are. And—well, we sing to them, and talk to them, and tell them stories. Some mothers teach their children to draw, but mine go to my sister's for that. I'm not clever at all."

"Don't believe her, sir," said the brother; "she is as clever as a squirrel. There isn't a cleverer woman in Manchester."

"Why, what can I do, you silly child?" said the hostess, with one of her happy dimpled smiles.

"Do!" said the boy. "You can make other people do things. Anything you like."

"Nonsense, Tom!"

"You can; because you can make anybody love you. Isn't that clever? Look at her guilty blush; she knows."

"I know you are a goose," said his sister; "but if it comes to making people love me, what about Laura?"

"Oh, Laura! That's different," said the youth.

"Yes. It's genius." Mrs. Norris turned to Mr. Fry. "My sister Laura," she said, "is so beautiful—is really so *beautiful*, that even the women cannot be stern with her."

"She is too bad, Laura," said the boy; "she *likes* people to make fools of themselves over her."

"My dear," said his sister, "how can you wonder. Besides——"

"Besides," said Tom, "she has never done anything useful in her life."

"Oh, Tom!" Mrs. Norris looked quite hurt. "Never done anything useful? But is not genius useful? The poet, the painter, the singer: what is their genius for? It is to make joy, my dear. And who can look at Laura and not be glad? Her beauty, that is her genius; her gift to us, that is how she sings her song."

"She gives pain," said Tom, sturdily; "you give happiness, more than anyone, Katie; but she gives pain."

"Well, then," said Mrs. Norris, with another of her wonderful smiles, "If you and I, Tom, try to do good, let some of it count for Laura. Besides, it does a man no harm to be hurt as she hurts. It does him good very often."

"Would *you* do what she does, Kate?" asked the boy.

"I couldn't, dear, I couldn't, or perhaps I might. You are too serious, Tom, for a boy. And Laura is not so very bad. And she is so very, very lovely." Mrs. Norris sighed, smiled, and, turning to the wizard, said: "Our children are in the orchard playing, all except Bernard, and Bernard is a dunce."

"How do you mean, a dunce?" asked Mr. Jorkle.

"He's lazy, that's all," said Tom. "I was, when I was his age."

"He *isn't* lazy, Tom; and he isn't stupid," said the mother; "if you loved him as I do you'd understand. You see, sir," she continued, addressing Mr. Jorkle, "Bernard is rather a

peculiar boy. I think the lessons don't interest him. He is inattentive and forgets."

"But," said Mr. Jorkle, "don't you try means to *make* him learn?"

Mrs. Norris raised her dark eyebrows and pouted prettily. "Make him learn—*make* him?" she said; "why, he doesn't *like* it."

"And does he only do as he *likes?*" asked the General.

"He likes to sit in the woods, and moon," said Tom; "he does a lot of that. He's doing it now."

"But—ha—what are you going to make of him, madam, at that rate?"

"Why, now, sir, I cannot even guess," said the mother; "but my father was just such a boy, and yet—you have heard of Dr. Thewlis."

"Certainly, certainly," said Mr. Fry, "and was he your father?"

"Yes. And he destroyed consumption. He abolished consumption entirely." She turned to Mr. Jorkle, smiling. "So you see, sir, how hard it is to judge. The slow boy often makes the great man. My dear father did one grand thing. Think how much we all owe him. And some day Bernard may wake up and make us all ashamed that we ever thought him stupid. No, sir, with a boy like that one can do nothing but wait; only love him and hold him closer."

Mr. Fry looked from her soft, kindling face to his companions, and said, as he tapped his snuff box, "Well, gentlemen, you hear. Do you think still it would be wise to take children from such a mother, and hand them

over to be ground up in your damned scholastic machinery?"

"I don't agree with you at all, sir," cried Mr. Jorkle.

"Ah," said the wizard, "but if you were in Bernard's shoes?"

"Here is Bernard," said Mrs. Norris, and as she spoke a boy of about nine vaulted over the sill of the open window and ran into her arms. The mother stooped, gave him an affectionate and lusty hug, and kissed his short black hair. "Where have you been, Bernard dear?" she asked.

The boy looked up at her. He was not yet aware of the strangers. "I've been in the Long Wood, mummy," he said.

"And what were you doing, dear?"

"Nothing, mummy."

"Nothing? Your Uncle Tom says you are a dunce."

The boy turned a pair of serious dark eyes upon his uncle, then upon his mother. "I'm all right, mummy," he said. He snatched her hand, kissed it, and ran out of the room, laughing. A few moments later he appeared in the orchard, running in a business-like way, with steady swiftness.

"That boy's all right," said the General; "he's got a good eye in his head. Hah! He'll go far and do much. And—hah—the lady is quite right. I tell you she *is*, Jorkle."

"Pooh!" said Mr. Jorkle, "Mr. Fry has bewitched you. It's downright madness."

"It's clean old English sense," cried the General. "Hah! it is, Jorkle. All you school-

masters are a parcel of old women, begad. I always thought you were, and now I—hah—I see it, don't you know. Hah! They trampled all over us with their damned clump-soled intellects. Dash it all, they assaulted and battered us, by George! Hah! we were governed a devilish deal too much, and—hah—that sort of thing."

"As a soldier," said Mr. Jorkle, "I should expect that you would believe in discipline."

"So I do," the General answered, "so I do, by George—for soldiers. Hah! But I'm talking about cram. You cane a boy, begad, because he doesn't remember how many penny farthing candles you can sell a fool for one and ninepence. Hah! dash it all, we don't want a nation of demnition tallow chandlers. That boy's one of the Drake and Dampier breed. He doesn't learn lessons, he teaches 'em. He doesn't—hah—build jerry cottages; he builds nations. You can get the other sort for a pound a week to sell candles in five languages. Hah! dash it all, Jorkle, you are in the trade yourself. But if you met that boy in a cavalry charge when he is ten years older he'd have your whiskers off before you could say Jack Robinson. Hah! Hang it all, some fellows are all words and figures, don't you know? But you can tell a doer and a goer, and a stayer, by the turn of his eye. Hah! Hum! And there you *are*, dammit."

"Very good, very good, General," said Mr. Jorkle, sourly, "and when are you going to turn Socialist?"

"Socialist, be hanged!" exclaimed the old

soldier, "I'm none of your Socialists. But—hah—I know facts when I see 'em. Hah! I know a man from a mermaid."

"I daresay, but what has that to do with the question?" Mr. Jorkle asked.

"Hah! Everything," said the General. "Every big and little thing in the world. You fellows think a man is filled with cram, as a demnition doll is filled with sawdust. I've been in the swim, and I know better. It isn't a question of—hah—cram; it's a question of guts. Hah! Don't tell me. You have clerks in your office who could cipher your head off. There's a thumping difference between turning a Latin verse and turning an Afghan flank."

"Then education is useless, General," said Mr. Jorkle.

"Not at all. Hah! But men may fight with axes, or with rifles. It's the stomach that wins."

The General turned to Mrs. Norris. "Madam," he said, "I'm—hah—delighted to have met you. Hah! You have talked jolly good sense, and —hah—that sort of thing. Hah! And have done it so prettily that my—hah—my poor friend here doesn't understand that he's beaten."

"I don't think I understand a great deal of what you say, sir," said the lady, laughing, "but I know you have spoken very kindly of my boy, and I feel that you are right, as well as kind. And I thank you very much. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Hah! Well," said the General, "what do you fellows say? I don't want to hear any more about children's lessons, myself, don't

you know. I want to have a look at the men. Hah! Besides, we have already trespassed too long upon this lady's kindness. What do you say, Jorkle?"

Mr. Jorkle shrugged his shoulders, but said nothing.

"Well, sir," said Mrs. Norris to the General, "if you mean that you would like to see some of our men at work, I am sure my brother will act as guide. But to-day it is too late. Though, of course, you would find many of them working at home. Mr. Norris is up at the observatory, taking out some calculations."

"What I should like to see," said the General, "is some—hah—good beefy navvies shifting dirt, or some fellows throwing a bridge across a valley, don't you know, and that sort of thing. Hah! Those are the fellows that count. Music and stars are all very fine; but—hah—it's the bullocky beggars with shovels and picks that make civilisation possible. Hah! You know what I mean, madam."

"*I* know what you mean," said the wizard, "better than you know yourself, General, for you are talking rank Socialism. But I don't think this lady understands what 'beefy navvies' and 'bullocky beggars' are, and the laughter which she is so heroically subduing probably arises from the fact that she regards us as odd-looking, badly dressed old fossils, who converse in the unknown tongue."

"Oh, it isn't that," cried Mrs. Norris; "but I feel so ignorant when I listen to your talk, for though it is English I cannot understand half of it; and then your friends look so

serious, and seem angry without being so, and —and"—(here the laughter shook in her kind voice)—"your friend Mr. Jorkle seems to have such contempt for our poor lessons, and is so serious about it, that—that—oh! please let me show you the garden. Perhaps you will like our rose trees; some of them are already in bloom."

"Hah! With pleasure, madam," said the General, "and — hah — if you don't mind laughing at us we should regard it as—hah—friendly, and that sort of thing. Hah! If you can get any fun out of us we shall be awfully glad, don't you know. Hah! I shall be glad to think that such a weary old fogey as myself can be—hah—a source of innocent merriment, don't you know, and—hah—that sort of thing."

"I am sure you are very unkind to yourself, and very kind to other people," said Mrs. Norris, "and you are not at all like what you say, though you do look rather troubled and sad. I fear you are tired, and have come far. So you must sit amongst the rose trees, and I will get you some refreshment. Then Tom will fetch my husband, and we will dine together, if you can afford us so much time."

"We are most grateful, madam," said the General. "Hah! Our time is all our own."

"Oh, how jolly!" said the hostess; "then you can come with us to the ball?"

"The ball!"

"Yes. There is a ball—a festival ball, in honour of the May. Oh, here comes Mr. Norris."

CHAPTER SEVEN
TOMTIT LEMON

THE entrance of Mr. Norris the Assistant Astronomer-General, and expositor of spiral nebulæ, was somewhat informal, considering the eminence and gravity of that gentleman's position. Heralded by a chorus of shrill screams and boisterous laughter, the great man bundled suddenly into view amongst the apple trees, a score of long-legged boys and girls at his heels, and bore down full tilt upon his homestead, kicking before him a football, improvised from a twisted hay-band. Panting and flushed, the astronomer dribbled the ball through the orchard, and was in act to score a goal through the garden gate, when the ball was cleverly whisked away from him by a wild-eyed maiden with poppy-red cheeks and streaming hair, who sent it flying back into the ruck, and then sat down vigorously amongst the primroses.

"There you go, Tomtit Lemon," said the eminent scientist, panting, and leaning against the gate, "just when I was going to kick a goal. How would *you* like it?"

The girl, breathless and laughing, could only gasp, "Oh, Mr. Norris! Oh, oh!"

"Oh, Mr. Norris!" repeated the astronomer, as he helped her to rise; "a nice trick to play an astrologer. I shall consult the stars about this. I shouldn't wonder if Saturn made himself exceedingly unpleasant about it."

"Oh, Mr. Norris," panted the girl, as she pushed her hair out of her eyes, "oh, how you *did* run!"

"No flattery, miss," said the philosopher; "*that* won't save you. And now, my dear, come along and have some lemonade and toffee. Hallo! Here's company!"

The Assistant Astronomer-General, holding the girl by the wrist, came forward. He was a stout, strongly-built man, with close-cropped black hair, keen dark eyes, and a smile that displayed the perfection of his white teeth. "Gentlemen," he said, "I hope I have not kept you waiting. If it is celestial business, we will begin by comforting ourselves with apples, and staying ourselves with flagons. Kate, the times are sadly out of joint when a solid and responsible citizen cannot dribble a hay-band home from the observatory without being set upon by a mob of rudesbys. Take the prisoner, prithee, and kindly introduce me to the ambassadors from Norway."

"My dear," said his wife, gently drawing the girl to her side, "these three guests are strangers, and are interested in our ways of work and the training of children. Perhaps, if you can be serious, you may give them some information."

The astronomer listened with a smile, and, the introductions having been made, sat down

under the mulberry tree and looked at his guests inquiringly.

"My friend, Mr. Jorkle," said the wizard, "is somewhat concerned about your methods of education. He fears that they are inadequate."

"Indeed?" said the astronomer. "Well, perhaps he is right. But our system is the same as the system in vogue in other countries. From Japan to Canada and from St. Petersburg to Gibraltar the system varies very slightly."

"And—er—what *is* the system?" asked Mr. Jorkle.

"Well," said the astronomer, with his cheerful smile, "I hardly know how to explain. We teach the children to read and write, and give them a few elementary ideas about Nature; and then, as they grow up, each youth follows his own bent. If a boy or girl takes to art, or science, the way is made smooth."

"You teach science, then?" said Mr. Jorkle.

"Yes; to those who are interested. I think most of our women and men know something of science. You see, it is of such very great importance."

"But you do not compel them to learn?"

"Compel them! No. If it comes to that, we do not compel them to eat their food, nor play at cricket, nor fall in love."

"You find the young people apt to learn?"

"Naturally. Now, there's Tomtit Lemon. She's only fourteen, and she's a tomboy, and a ringleader in all kinds of mischief; but if you ask her you'll find she has plenty of sense. She

can swim, and run, and bat and bowl like a boy; she has a wicked eye and a witty tongue; but she knows that wisdom is better than rubies."

Mr. Jorkle glanced dubiously at the pretty child, and said, "You are sure of that?"

"Oh," said the astronomer, "ask her. Here, Tomtit, when are you going to the classes?"

The girl looked up shyly, and removed a rosy apple from her rosy lips. "I think in about a year, Mr. Norris," she said.

"And what do you want to learn, my dear?" asked the astronomer.

"Oh, I want to learn *everything*," the child answered, eagerly.

"Don't be greedy, Tommy; don't be greedy, darling."

The girl laughed. "Oh, I *am* a greedy pig," she said, "but I want to know such a lot. Daisy Sergeant is only sixteen, and she is learning chemistry, and geology, and wood-carving, and the theory of music, and mathematics, and languages. And I want to learn them all. And astronomy, too. I *love* astronomy."

"Do you learn astronomy?" asked Mr. Jorkle.

"Oh, only a very little yet, sir," said the child.

"Hum! And do you know any of the constellations?"

"Oh, yes, sir, all of them. But I like the star clusters, and the nebulæ. I often look at the lovely cluster in Cancer through the big Town Hall telescope, and the nebulous suns in the Pleïades. I *love* the Pleïades."

"Ha! What do you mean by nebulous suns?"

"*New* suns, sir. Suns that are forming out of star dust."

"Who—er—told you that?"

"Mother told me, sir. But I read about it in the books. And we have photographs of the nebulæ. The Pleïades are lovely."

"Hum! And do you learn history?"

The child shook her head. "Not much, sir," she said. "We don't like history. It is so horrible. We don't like to read about battles, and murders, and executions. Mother says it is the nightmare period. It is all over now, mother says, and it is better to forget bad dreams."

"You don't read about Julius Cæsar and the Kings of England?"

"No, sir."

"Then do you know nothing about the past?"

"The past, sir? I know about evolution, a little. About the beginning of life, and the descent of man, sir; and about the geologic periods, millions of years ago. We see all those things in the Town Hall, sir, and mother tells us stories about them. Jim and I often go out finding fossils."

"Ha! And what will you be when you are a woman?"

"He means what will you work at," said Mr. Norris.

"Oh," cried the girl, her eyes sparkling with pleasure, "I shall help Jim to make microscopes."

"That will do, Tomtit, thank you," said the astronomer. Then, turning to Mr. Jorkle, he said, "You see, sir, it is as I told you. The child has plenty of sense. But why should you think she would not wish to learn?"

"Hum! But—well," said Mr. Jorkle, "I understand, Mr. Norris, that your own son is not a very keen scholar."

"Oh!" The astronomer smiled. "You mean Bernard. Bernard's a bit of pickle. But he's very young. He has a mind, though. And in such cases it is wise to be very cautious. There is always danger in tampering with a young brain. It is so easy to destroy the originality of a child's mind: as easy as rubbing the bloom off a peach. And what a tragedy it would be to maim a new soul before it got its strength."

At this moment Master Bernard appeared at the house door and hailed Miss Lemon. "Hya, Tomtit! Come and bowl for me and Dicky Brewster," he shouted.

The girl ran off at once, and Mr. Norris called out, "She'll bowl you out, Bernard!"

"Hah! By Jove, Jorkle," said the General, "she'd have bowled *you* out precious soon if you hadn't played for safety."

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Jorkle.

"Oh—hah—what a humbug you are, Jorkle," said the General. "You know as much about astronomy as most of us do. You know the names of the planets and a few of the constellations, and that sort of thing."

"Speak for yourself, General."

"So I do. Hah! That's just it, don't you

know. I'd no idea there were nebulæ in the Pleïades. And neither had you. Hah! And a jolly lot you know about evolution. Hey!"

"Science with us," said Mr. Fry, "is caviare to the general. It is not too much to say that we have not yet got over the superstitious dread and dislike of science which the church originated, and still nurses. But here science is on a quite different footing. The best scientific knowledge and the best scientific brains are held by right for the service of the nation. These people are as generous in their scientific expenditure as ours are in their expenditure upon law courts, battleships, and prisons. The result of this wise liberality will be apparent to you when you get about amongst the people. For the present I need only remark that the general death rate for England and Wales—*here*—is less than five in the thousand."

"Oh," said Mr. Jorkle, "that reminds me. Even assuming that the average health is abnormally good here, there must be cases of disease."

"Certainly," said the wizard.

"Well—er—in a country where everybody has to work, what becomes of a weakling or a cripple?" he asked.

The wizard looked to Mr. Norris for a reply. Mr. Norris showed signs of surprise. "What becomes of a weakling or a cripple?" he asked. "Why, what should become of him? He is taken care of."

"By the State?" asked Mr. Jorkle.

"By the State? I don't know what you mean

by 'the State.' There is young Bailey, son of a friend of mine. He has an incurable spinal trouble. Well, do you ask what we did with him?"

"Certainly."

"How curious! Bailey had the best medical advice, and acted upon it. So they took a house near Heacham, on the Norfolk coast, and went to live there. The young man has the best attention. His sister looks after him. A nurse is engaged to nurse him. A doctor visits him. He has every comfort. Of course. What else *can* be done?"

"And—er—who pays—I mean?" said Mr. Jorkle. "Is all this at the expense of the community?"

The astronomer rubbed his chin thoughtfully, and looked puzzled. "I'm afraid," he said, "that I don't understand. Of course, if a man is sick his people nurse him and tend him. And if they cannot manage it themselves they have help. Naturally."

"But—the burden falls upon somebody," protested the financier.

"My dear sir," said Mr. Norris, "you puzzle me. If a member of your own family were sick, or disabled, would you not do all you could for him?"

"Certainly."

"Certainly. Obviously. Well, the nation is a large family. When a member of the family is ill or helpless, the family go to his assistance. What do you mean by the burden? There is plenty for all—more than we want. We have lots of food, and medicine, and houses. We

have many doctors. What are doctors and nurses for? You must be joking."

Mr. Jorkle coughed, "And suppose," said he, "that a man is lazy, and pretends to be sick?"

"Pretends!" said the astronomer, "Pretends to be sick! Why in the name of reason should a man be such a fool?"

"Well, to avoid working."

"Upon my word," exclaimed the astronomer, "you *are* joking! Of course, if a man did not want to work—which seems absurd—he would not want to rust and moulder away in a sick room. Unless he were *mad*, and then, of course, he would be sick in reality."

"Then, do you mean to say you have no loafers?"

"Loafers? What are loafers?"

"Men who are too lazy to work."

"Well"—Mr. Norris looked very much astonished—"perhaps there may be men who would rather go to sleep in the sun, like pigs, than do healthy and interesting work. But if there are such men they have sense enough not to own their folly. Why, they wouldn't be *respected!*"

"The fact is, Mr. Jorkle," said the wizard, "you cannot see things from the standpoint of these people. Here a man who shirked his work would be regarded much as we regard a gentleman who cheats at cards."

"Good Ged!" exclaimed the General.

"Yes," said the wizard, "it is so. With us work is regarded as degrading. Work is a task—a task imposed by poverty, or by in-

capacity to live by the work of others. Here work is regarded as honourable. Not only that; it is regarded as pleasant."

"Well. It *is* pleasant," said Mr. Norris. "It is pleasant, just as cricket or dancing is pleasant. It is not only pleasant to do work, but there is the added pleasure of seeing that it is good when it is done. I paint tiles. But I tell you I envy the men who have more active work to do. I never see the Channel Tunnel without wishing I had had a hand in that glazed brickwork. It is beautiful. Twenty miles of brick tunnel, as smooth as the inside of a telescope. And there's the great observatory on Goathland Moor. Fancy the joy of making the six-foot lens and mounting the machinery, and building the tower. Why, I know two brothers who didn't speak for months because one of them got a job as a mason there and the other was too late. I can tell you such work as that is sought after, and no wonder."

"There is no mistake about it, Jorkle," said the General, producing his cigar case, "this is a wild and dizzy dream."

"And where," asked Mr. Jorkle, who looked worried and pale, "where in the case of a great work like the Channel Tunnel do you get the capital?"

The astronomer shook his head. "Capital?" said he; "what's that?"

"Well," Mr. Jorkle explained, "who provides the bricks, and feeds and lodges the workmen?"

Mr. Norris leaned back in his chair and

smiled. "Why," he said, "what a funny question. All those things were sent down to Dover from the farms and stores, of course. Bricksetters have to be fed while they build a tunnel just as they have to be fed while they build our houses. But, of course, when the local stores cannot supply all that is wanted, other stores have to be drawn upon. But, tell me, what do you mean by capital?"

The wizard laughed. "Not now, Mr. Norris, if you don't mind," he said, "for here comes your wife, and I believe she is calling us to dinner."

"Hah!" said the General, "by George, that is capital!"

CHAPTER EIGHT
THE BALL ROOMS

ASCELLES, the lightning-rod man, was as handsome as his wife. He stood up to the General's shrewd gaze in complete justification of the lady's choice: a tall, straight, active man, with blue eyes and golden hair, perfectly dressed, perfectly groomed, perfectly bred, serene, intellectual, strong.

"Hah! It's a fine room!" said the General, "and a ripping band, by Jove!"

"I suppose you've been a dancer, General, in your day," said Mr. Jorkle; "for my part I never *can* imagine what people see in it."

Mr. Lascelles turned his blue eyes upon the corpulent financier with a look of astonishment, in which there glimmered a light of amusement.

"Do you mean, Mr. Jorkle," he asked, "that you can find nothing in a ballroom to appeal to you?"

"That, sir," Mr. Jorkle answered, "is accurately what I do mean."

"Hah! Jorkle," said the General, "never was young, nor—hah—human."

"And what, Mr. Lascelles," asked the financier, "what, may I inquire, can you see to interest a man of—er—sense?"

"Sense!" Mr. Lascelles repeated, "If you use the word as implying a sense of beauty, I can see a very great deal here to appeal to such a sense."

"Oh!" said Mr. Jorkle, "I've heard of little but beauty all day. I'm not a feminist myself."

"But it seems to me," said Mr. Lascelles, "that it is not a mere question of femininity. There are many beautiful women here, certainly. But the men are worthy of them. And this is a beautiful hall, is it not? And you get beautiful colour, and fine perfume: great banks of newly-cut violets. And the music is sublime. Listen to that waltz. Then look at the dresses. So you have youth, and strength, lovely women, handsome men, noble architecture, light, colour, joy, life, the scent of spring meadows, and the magic of passionate music, all blent together as subtly as the odours of many sweet flowers in a garden. What more can you ask, sir?"

Mr. Jorkle began to frown and to swell with the answer to this challenge; but before he could get a word out, Mr. Lascelles was called away. Directly he was gone, with the promise of an early return, Mr. Fry took his place and repeated his question. "What more could you ask, Mr. Jorkle?"

"More! more!" exclaimed that gentleman. "It's all stupid rubbish, childish triviality. What is the use of it? All this noise and scramble? A parcel of men and women spinning round and round in each other's arms, like dancing Dervishes. It isn't sensible. Hah! It isn't modest. And I notice, too, Mr. Fry,

that these perfect people are just as absurdly dressed—or undressed—as the dancers in our own ridiculous society functions. It's—er—it's intolerable, sir. Quite!"

The General shrugged his shoulders, laughed, and curled his moustaches. "Hah! Jorkle," he said, "you are a confounded old Turk. You don't know it, but you are. You want a pretty woman rolled up in a bale of flannel and muzzled—hah—like a bad dog. Hah! You're not flesh and blood; you're a waxwork, dammit!"

"You have the morals of a soldier," said Mr. Jorkle. "I hope *you*, Mr. Fry, do not approve of this immodesty of exposure."

"Immodesty?" said the wizard. "I am not conscious of any immodesty in this room."

"Well, I *am*, sir; I *am*," cried Mr. Jorkle.

"But," protested Mr. Fry, "as the ladies are not——?"

"You mean if they are ignorant they are not immodest," Mr. Jorkle frowned, "do you think, then, that the effect of such an exhibition is good?"

"The effect upon whom?" the wizard asked.

"Upon the men."

"Ah!" said the wizard, "now you are coming to the point. The effect upon you is bad. Upon the General and me it is not bad: it is good. So that all the immodesty exists in your own imagination."

"You say the effect upon you is good?"

"Certainly. The effect of beauty is good. Beautiful painting and sculpture appeal to the better nature of a man. And there is no

picture, no sculpture so beautiful as a beautiful woman. How beautiful these women are judge for yourself."

"He must," said Mr. Lascelles, who had just joined them, "for no one can tell him. It is very humiliating to an author to acknowledge it, but no man, not the greatest poet, has ever been able to give in words a definite picture of a woman's beauty."

"Hah! By Jove!" said the General; "how do you account for that?"

"Easily enough, to my sorrow," Mr. Lascelles answered. "There are no comparisons."

"Hah! Hum! I should have thought there were heaps," said the General.

"Try, then. There is a young girl right opposite to us, smiling at her partner while she fastens her glove. What is her smile like? What in the wide theatre of lovely nature resembles it? Look at her soft grey eyes. You cannot name the colour of them. Can you compare them to a star? There is no humour, no love, no kindness in a star. There is no change of expression in a star. There is nothing in the whole range of Nature so beautiful as a woman's eyes: not even the eyes of a child. So there is nothing to which you can compare them."

"Hah! That's true enough," said the General.

"Well, again," said Lascelles, "who can describe the beauty of a woman's throat? You can see the beauty, you can feel it. But there is nothing to compare with it. 'Her neck is like the swan's'! What a clumsy simile!

A woman's neck is no more like the neck of a swan than a woman's hand is like a lily. There is no flower petal to compare with a woman's skin. All the beauties of all the flowers, and birds, and springs, and dawns cannot match the loveliness of a woman. She is the glory of glories, the wonder of wonders." Mr. Lascelles turned to Mr. Jorkle. "You will agree with me in this," he said.

"I—er—never trouble my head about such things, sir," Mr. Jorkle answered, gruffly, "and as I am quite out of my element here, I shall go into the garden and smoke a cigar."

"Our friend," said the wizard, as the great financier ambled away, "is of a temperament difficult to describe."

"Jorkle," said the General, "is—hah—the kind of man who marries his cook."

"You have, General," the wizard exclaimed, "the happy directness of speech which I have often admired in military men."

"Hah!" said the General, laughing, "I *was* on the wicket that time. Hah! And I'm only just beginning to understand—hah—in my old age, don't you know, how devilish immoral and debasing the Jorkle person is. I have always—hah—loved women, and been—hah—ashamed to say so, and that sort of thing. And—hah—hang it—it was hogs of the Jorkle breed who made me ashamed. Hah! I ought to be kicked, don't you know? I had a mother, and a wife, and—hah—ought to have known better Hah! Why, it makes me sick to own, but I've been afraid—dammit!—I've been afraid of the Jorkles. Hah! Fry, we are *all* afraid of the

Jorkles. It's as you said, sir, we have forgotten mother. By God, we have as a nation, dishonoured our good old mothers! Hah! Dammit all! Yes. Hah!—I suppose one couldn't get a whisky-and-soda?"

"I'm sure you deserve one," said the wizard, smiling. "Let us walk round the room first, and have a look at the dancers; then we will see if we can call up Light."

Leaving Mr. Lascelles, the two walked down the side of the great hall listening to the music and observing the dancers. In the swimming rhythm of the wonderful waltz the couples glided past them. The two men confessed to each other in their looks, with all the frankness of their years, the strength of the appeal which all this youth and joy and beauty made to them. There was no need of words between them. The old soldier, in all his long and wide experience, had never been present at a scene so happily brilliant, so humanly perfect. The wizard knew this: the General made no effort to conceal it. So they moved on in silent communion until they reached the end of the room farthest from the orchestra. There they stood for some minutes without a word. When at last the wizard spoke, he might have been reading his companion's thought, or feeling.

"All the grace and beauty of life: the glamour of romance," he said, "softly touch one here. We see what we have never before seen; feel what we have never before felt. But it is a dream—a vision of happiness in another planet. Not for us the Promised Land. We have missed it. We are too late."

The General nodded gravely, his eyes still fixed upon the dancers. Then, with a hoarse, rumbling sound that was partly a sigh and partly a cough, he said, "Hah! Hum! And all these are—working people."

"The people of this nation," answered Mr. Fry, "are all working people."

"They — hah — look so refined and intelligent, and—that sort of thing," said the General; "they have such style; they are so well dressed. Hah! They are perfect, don't you know?"

"They *are* perfect," the wizard sighed. "They are graceful, cultured, beautiful, and happy."

The General curled his moustache and frowned.

"Come," said the wizard, sharply, "come this way."

He turned towards a door. The General followed him. The next moment they were in a dark passage. The wizard led the way in silence. It was a long passage, and there were several turnings. As they went, a sound of music came to them from the direction towards which they were moving.

"Another dance room?" asked the General.

"Yes," replied the wizard, "here." He snatched back a curtain, and, taking the General's arm, led him into a great hall.

"Good God!" exclaimed the General, and stopped dead, gazing round him in astonishment.

It was a ballroom, one of great size, but dingy, unclean, tawdry, and it was occupied

by a dense crowd of dancers suited to the environment. The crowd consisted for the most part of young men and young women, differing sadly in dress, in manner, and in appearance from the dancers in the hall the two had just left. Most of the faces were anæmic, few were pretty. The girls generally were lean of figure, with stooping shoulders. The men were generally coarse, gawky, undersized. The dress was crude in cut and colour, as badly made as it was badly worn. There was plenty of noise, but no sign of real happiness; instead a boisterous hilarity, or dreamy lassitude. Many of the girls were laughing stridently; many of the men were smoking; not all of them were sober. One loutish youth, with a dirty collar and dirty hands, who was waltzing with a rather pretty and very young girl, had a clay pipe in his mouth, and was smoking over his partner's shoulder. A girl of twenty, with beautiful, but untidy auburn hair, and a faded peony drooping at the breast of her crumpled muslin frock, was walking unsteadily amongst the dancers, with a glass of muddy beer in her hand, and was calling out in a hoarse screech for "Bill 'Arry."

The wizard looked at the General, and took a pinch of snuff.

"Hah! What the devil's *this?*" demanded the honourable and gallant member.

"This," the wizard answered, "is Manchester —the *other* Manchester, *our* Manchester. These are working people. *Our* working people. This is the happy and admirable state of things which the opponents of Socialism are so afraid

that any change must spoil. Here you have the popular type and the popular pleasure, as they *are*. Here you have the fruits of liberty, of education, of morality, of religion—as understood by Jorkle. This is real. This is practical! Well, are you proud of it?"

The General looked blankly at the crowd and grimly at the wizard; then he said, "Oh, damn!"

"Exactly," said the wizard; then turning suddenly away, he clapped his hands and shouted, "Light!"

CHAPTER NINE
WORK AND PLAY

HE three lay in their cobweb hammocks, in the cobweb tent spun in the woods by Light's magic spiders, and smoked their cigars before sleeping.

"Hum! Hah! As far as we've got," said the General, "these people seem to be jolly and healthy, and that sort of thing. But it seems to me that—hah—life in such a country must be beastly mild, don't you know."

"You mean dull?" asked the wizard.

"Deadly dull," said Mr. Jorkle.

"Why?" asked the wizard.

"Well—hah—no sport, don't you know," said the General.

"Shooting, for instance?" Mr. Fry suggested.

"Yes; well, shootin', certainly," said the General.

"I never could understand, General," said the wizard, "what pleasure there can be in shooting birds."

"Hah! Hang it," said the General, "it's the—hah—sport."

"But why," asked the wizard, "do you like it?"

"Well—don't you know?—hah—of course," the General answered, "the bird flies up, and

you let go, and you—hah—hit it. Hah! The sport is in hitting it. Hitting the mark."

"But it seems to me," said the wizard, "that would be an equally good excuse for shooting babies."

The General was puzzled. The idea was too abstract for him. He stared blankly across the tent at Mr. Fry; then looked earnestly at the glowing tip of his cigar. Then he said, "But—hah—we *don't* shoot babies, dammit."

The wizard laughed. "My dear General," he said, "you are most delightfully English, and one must deal with you in the hardest of hard facts. Now, it is a fact that since the birds cannot defend themselves, to shoot them is cowardly, and, since they suffer pain, to shoot them is cruel. These people would regard such 'sport' with horror; therefore, they do not feel the loss of it, any more than *you* feel the loss of the more ancient sports of throwing Christians to the lions, or baiting Jews, or roasting heretics. But to come back to your feeling that life here must be dull. It seems to me that you are really raising the question of how these people amuse themselves."

"Well," said the General, "that's about what I—hah—want to get at. How *do* they amuse themselves?"

"Good," said the wizard. "I think that both you gentlemen will admit that the first essential to amusement of any kind is health. A really healthy man can find amusement in felling trees, or running in a paper chase, or climbing rocks, or throwing stones at a post. But a man in bad health cannot, as the Irish say, 'take

any delight out of himself,' under the most auspicious circumstances, simply because there is no delight in him. Well, these people are wonderfully and unprecedentedly healthy. And then, another deadly foe to amusement is care: what we call worry. A worried man is like a sick man—very, very hard to amuse. Well, these people have fewer cares than any people our earth has ever bred. What we call business worries, or money troubles, have no existence here. So these men and women come to the feast of pleasure with keen and healthy appetites, and hunger is the best sauce."

"But the question is," said Mr. Jorkle, "what do their wonderful appetites find to feed on?"

"Hah! Just so," said the General, "what do the beggars play at?"

"They play at many things," answered the wizard, "and you will perhaps be surprised when I tell you that one of their chief amusements is work."

"Work!"

"Yes. For work is a pleasure when it is not imposed as a toil. Even in our England many find recreation in work. You must have met with the amateur gardener, the amateur cabinet-maker, the amateur sailor, the amateur builder. Well, in this country almost every man or woman works at several trades. The tailor, the potter, the weaver, will go haymaking, or will take a barge on the canals, or will work on a ship to America or India. The sailor or the navvy will settle down for a year in one of the cities and cultivate tomatoes, or help to build houses, or will lay pavements, or carve hand-

railings. When a new road is to be made, or an old one mended, all the men will pour out of their workshops and houses and set about the job as if they were preparing a lawn for a garden party. They can all work, and they all like to work. To them work is sport."

"The deuce it is," said the General.

"I don't," said Mr. Jorkle, "find my workmen very eager to do anything."

"No," the wizard answered, "because they *are* your workmen, and they would think themselves fools, and would be thought fools, to do more for you than they are paid for. But these people are their own workmen. They do not work for *your* profit, nor for the profit of any one person. They work for the general good, and for their own pleasure. There are no masters and no servants here. But you have seen the same kind of thing in summer camps. The men pitch the tents, and dig the trenches, and carry water, and chop wood, and build fires, and peel potatoes. The ladies make the tea, and lay the table, and wash the cups. Nobody wishes to shirk the work. It is for the general comfort; it is part of the fun. Well, that is how it is here, but on a larger scale and a more permanent basis."

"I think I see the idea," said the General. "Hah! There may be something in it."

"There is everything in it," the wizard answered; "for what is possible to a small party of friends is possible to a large nation of friends."

"Granted a complete change of human nature," said Mr. Jorkle.

"No," said the wizard; "granted a complete change of circumstances. The chief difference in this case is the difference between class servitude and equality."

"Well," said Mr. Jorkle, "but besides mending roads and digging drains, what have these people to amuse them?"

"Well, as you have seen," said Mr. Fry, "they have music and dancing."

"And, besides?"

"Well, there is art."

"But all men are not artists, nor are all men fond of music."

"True. Then we have literature and science."

"You call those amusements?"

"I do. But I will pass them by, and come to sports and pastimes. And, to begin with, there are cricket and football. These games are played all over the world. Last week England beat France, in Paris, by one wicket. This week England plays Russia in London, and Germany at Manchester. The Russians are very strong; they beat the Indians last week at Moscow, and the Indians are a very fine team."

"Good," said the General; "go on."

"Well. Besides cricket and football, there are rowing, sailing, skating, swimming, cycling, and all kinds of indoor and outdoor athletics, most of which have county championships, and international championships, attached to them. And there are baseball, lacrosse, and tennis, and golf clubs. And there are the theatres."

"All jolly good things," said the General.

"Surely," said the wizard, "and then there

are all the social pleasures. Here they have picnics and festivals, for instance, with music, and games, and dancing in the open air. This week is the May Festival, and everybody goes out to enjoy the beauties and joys of the Spring."

"H'm! Sounds rather rustic; but I daresay it's all right," said the General.

"Yes," said the wizard, "these people can dance, and sing, and play, and have been taught to use their eyes. They find great delight in the skies, and fields, and flowers, and birds; and I might say they find even more delight in each other. You can understand, I am sure, General, that a young man need not feel bored by a ramble in the woods with one of the beautiful girls we saw to-night at the ball."

"Hah! By Jove!" said the General.

"Well," said the wizard, "with good health, beautiful towns and country, pleasant work, pleasant games, music, theatres, dancing, cricket, rowing, sailing, cycling, art, science, literature, and the loveliest and sweetest women ever seen surely these people need not be sad nor dull for lack of sport and occupation."

"It sounds all right," said the General.

"Oh, it *sounds* fair enough," said Mr Jorkle.

"Thank you," said the wizard. "And now, gentlemen, let us turn our attention to *our* England, and ask ourselves questions about the amusements of the people there."

"Hah! That's fair, certainly," said the General, "but what an artful customer you are,

Fry. Well, you have no shootin' here, anyhow."

"And," said the wizard, "supposing that shooting and fishing are sports, how much of such sports do the people get in England now? I think you'll find that fox-hunting, and pheasant shooting, and salmon and trout fishing are sports for the well-to-do. The people never have the chance to try them."

"Hah! That's true, certainly," said the General, "but the working classes have their fun, too, I suppose."

"Well, let us see what fun they have, and how much of it," said the wizard. "First of all, you will admit—Mr. Jorkle has already admitted—that they don't get much fun out of their work. Their work is largely mechanical, a monotonous, uninteresting task, done for others, and under the orders of others, and for the advantage of others. For what art or invention is there in the work of the farm labourer, the docker, the collier, the bricksetter, the nailmaker, the factory hand, the stoker, the tailor, the seamstress, the charwoman, or the domestic servant? The great mass of the workers are merely wheels in a great machine; they are turned round and round by other wheels. Then they live in ugly and gloomy streets, and work in unhealthy and unpleasant shops or factories. And they work long hours: from eight to twelve a day. Their towns and cities are not beautiful, and they see very little of the country. Ask the men and women in our own big towns a few simple questions about trees, or birds, or flowers. There are

millions of people in our England who have never seen the sea, who have hardly ever seen a wood, or a field, who have never played cricket, nor rowed a boat, nor swum fifty yards in clean water. The average British citizen does not know a titmouse from a yellow-hammer, a grayling from a chub, a beech from an elm. The average British citizen cannot sing, nor play, nor read music, nor paint, nor draw, nor carve, nor dance. The average British citizen never looks at the sky, nor at the birds nor flowers. He does not know good literature, nor art, nor drama, nor music, from bad. He could not make a picture frame, a copper tray, a silver bracelet, a kitchen poker, nor a three-legged stool. He could not cook a dinner, nor graft a slip on a tree, nor dig a straight trench, nor steer a boat, nor splice a rope, nor mend a kettle, nor break a ball from the off. What do the masses in our towns ever see of Nature? What do the labourers in our villages ever see of art or hear of music? In our England the great bulk of the people have no artistic nor intellectual pleasures. Have you ever been to the average village concert? Have you ever been to the cheap popular music-halls and theatres? Have you ever studied the cheap popular fiction?

"With these people, in this new England, life itself is beautiful. With us life is sordid, ugly, and monotonous. For our people there are the most banal music-halls, the most fatuous plays, the most egregious novels, the cheapest music; but there are betting and the public-house.

"But the whole of this new English nation has the best literature, art, music, sport, and athletics; better than the rich with us; and besides that, these people have more culture, finer health and a greater capacity for enjoyment. Go into the crowded quarters of London, Glasgow, Manchester, and the Black Country, and see what the homes and the lives of the workers are like and how much and what manner of amusements fall to their lot; and then ask yourselves whether here, in this fair and happy England, life is dull and slow? Why, the majority of our people do not know *how* to enjoy themselves. They have only learnt to worry and to work."

"Oh, you exaggerate," said Mr. Jorkle.

"No," said the wizard, "I am speaking of things I know, and have seen. Go into the towns and see the children in the block buildings playing behind iron bars, like animals in cages. Go and watch the youth and maidens of the East End on a Bank Holiday. Go to Southend or to Blackpool, and observe a holiday crowd."

"Well, after all," said Mr. Jorkle, "life should be something more serious than a pic-nic. Work is more important than play."

The wizard laughed. "You are changing front," he said; "we were speaking about play. You had both suggested that these people here had not enough of play. But when we come to speak of work I shall try to convince you that the new England beats the old in both play and work."

"I shall be hard to convince," said Mr.

Jorkle. "So far, I have seen only indications of trifling and pleasure-seeking. Music and dancing are poor equipments for the stern work of the world. I'm afraid these Utopians would fare badly in the rush and hurry of modern life."

"Ah!" said the wizard, "now you are thinking of the ruthless scuffle and fevered rush of *our* England. There is no such madness here. And, indeed, I must confess I have no patience with those stupid phrases of the hurry of modern life. The hurry! Look at the hurry of London life. What is it all about? To what end? What do the people hurry for? What comes of it?

"While five millions of frantic superficial Cockneys were hurrying and scrambling and hustling and bragging in the welter of their unlovely Babylon, desperately, jauntily, and noisily producing an infinite deal of nothing, Charles Darwin, in his quiet Kentish homestead, was silently at work—making a new religion and a new thought."

"Hah! Well played, Fry, well played, magician!" cried the General. "Hah! We *do* make a deuce of a row, don't you know, about nothing. Hah! Do you think one might have a—hah—whisky and soda?"

"Light!"

"Sir?"

"Whisky and soda and cigars."

"Now, Mr. Jorkle," said the wizard, "you want to talk about work."

But the only response from the Honourable Member for Shantytown East was a loud snore.

CHAPTER TEN
MEN OR MISERS

"HAT I don't understand, Mr. Fry," said the Honourable Member for Shantytown East, as he put down his coffee cup and took out his cigar-case, "is how you expect to get the business of the world done when you have removed the only powerful incentive to human effort."

"You mean money?" asked the wizard.

"Surely. What else?" Mr. Jorkle lit his cigar, and leaned back in his chair with his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat.

"You think," the wizard asked, in his soft voice, "that the one powerful incentive to human effort is money hunger?"

Mr. Jorkle coughed. "Is there any doubt about it?" he demanded.

The General curled his moustaches and looked sharply at Mr. Fry through his monocle.

"You agree with Mr. Jorkle, General?" the wizard inquired.

"Hah! Yes. Hang it, of course," said the General.

Mr. Fry nodded. "Then," said he, "you think that Nelson, Wellington, Gordon, and Clive fought for money?"

"Oh! Hah! Well, don't you know, there are exceptions to every rule."

"I see. Then, the patriot, the lover, the philanthropist, the poet, the artist, and the prophet are exceptions, and the miser is the rule?"

"We were not talking about misers," said Mr. Jorkle.

"No. But we shall have to talk about them." Mr. Fry took a pinch of snuff. "I see, gentlemen," he said, "that you have not outgrown the dismal axiom of the dismal science. I will repeat it for you, so that we may see what it is made of. I think it goes thus: 'The social affections are accidental and disturbing elements in human nature; but *avarice* is a constant element.' Do you endorse that statement?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Jorkle.

"And you believe," said the wizard, "that avarice is the strongest incentive to human action."

"Certainly."

"Stronger than ambition, or love, or vanity?"

"Certainly."

"Then, men will do more for money than they will do for love or honour?"

"Hah! *Most* men," said the General.

"But you will admit that an average man, not very good nor very bad, but just a normal, natural man, if he could save life or avert a public disaster, would do it, even if he knew he would not be paid?"

"Yes. I suppose so."

"But a normal, natural man would not take life nor bring disaster upon his fellows out of sheer wantonness, and with no hope of personal benefit from the crime."

"Of course not."

"Well, I think that proves that men will do good for its own sake; but that they will not do evil for its own sake."

"I—hah—don't quite see what you are driving at."

"I am suggesting that men will do good for the sake of the good; but that they will not do evil except for gain."

"What of it?"

"Why, I submit that such being the case the love of good is a constant element in human nature, and that avarice is only an accidental and disturbing element."

"Oh! Now you are up in the clouds!"

"Let us, then, descend to mother earth. Suppose a man were offered a million pounds to invent a machine. Would he be able to invent it if he did not possess the necessary brains?"

"Of course not."

"But, given the necessary brains, he could invent the machine, if he wished, although no prize were offered?"

"Naturally."

"It seems, then, that it is genius that invents machines, and not greed."

"Nobody denies that."

"But you really believe that a man possessed of the genius to invent a much-needed machine, or to do a much-needed work, can only be induced to act by the hope of pecuniary reward."

"I believe," said Mr. Jorkle, "that a man will try harder for money than for anything else."

"But you admit that genius can and does work without hope of gain."

"Oh—sometimes."

"Sometimes. And you admit that greed can accomplish nothing without genius."

"That is not the argument."

"It is part of the argument. For it seems to show that genius is stronger than greed, and that genius is not dependent upon greed for its impulse to action."

"Hah! I said before, there are exceptions," remarked the General.

"Well," said the wizard, "you are a soldier. Do you think the millions of soldiers who have entered the army, fought, suffered, died, have been actuated by the fierce desire to grasp the opulent reward of fourpence or a shilling a day?"

"Hah! Soldiers are different! Hang it!"

"Soldiers are exceptions. And the volunteers and yeomen who went out to South Africa, did they all go for the munificent pay?"

"Hum! An exceptional case."

"Another exception? You gentlemen have read history. Do you think that Socrates, Aristotle, St. Paul, Copernicus, Caxton, Newton, Herschell, Darwin, Shakespeare, Cromwell, Rembrandt, Dante, Nelson, and the rest of the world's benefactors and heroes worked and died for money?"

"Again—exceptions."

"I hope the exceptions will not overwhelm the rule. But does not history prove that for the sake of love, for the sake of duty, for the sake of truth, for the sake of pity, for the sake of faith, men and women have chosen poverty, obloquy, torture, and death; have laid their

heads upon the block, have resigned their bodies to the flames, have suffered imprisonment, execration, murder?"

"No one denies it."

"No one can. Men and women have done these things, and will again. But when did man or woman do as much for money?"

"Men will do anything for money."

"I beg your pardon. Men will not *die* for money. Money has had myriads of slaves, but money never had a martyr. In the temple of Mammon the Christian adage reads: 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own life?' Men will lie for money, steal for it, kill for it, fight for it; but they will not die for it. Now, millions have died for honour, for love, for religion, for freedom, for patriotism. How, then, can it be true that the lust for money is the strongest passion of the human heart?"

"Then, what, according to you, *is* the strongest human incentive?" asked Mr. Jorkle.

"Not greed. I should like to say that love is the strongest human passion. But let us say that the love of approbation is stronger than the greed for money, and let that serve."

"But I do not admit it."

"Very well. Let us try it. And first of all let me ask you why men are so greedy for money."

"You admit, then, that they are greedy?"

"I admit that, under existing conditions, most men wish to have money. But I have first of all to point out to you that only a very few love money, or desire money, for its own sake.

The man who loves money for its own sake is a miser. The normal man desires money for the sake of what it will buy. Therefore it is not the money he covets, but those things which money will bring."

"Of course."

"Of course. And now, let us see what money does bring, or is expected to bring, and then we shall begin to get nearer to the real motives of human nature."

"Proceed."

"Well, not to go too wide, I may claim that money is expected to bring ease, and pleasure, and power, and admiration. Is that so?"

"Agreed."

"Then, we find that men do not strive for money, but for ease, and pleasure, and power, and admiration. So that when we speak of avarice we really mean the love of ease, and pleasure, and power, and applause."

"It amounts to the same thing."

"I beg your pardon. It does nothing of the kind. Since money is only a means to an end, and not the end itself, it follows that were other and better means to the same end attainable the greed for money would cease to move men at all."

"You are arguing in a circle."

"I hope not. Men wish for power, and luxury, and ease, and admiration. They believe that money will bring these things. They believe, many of them, that these things are the most desirable prizes of life, and that without money they cannot be obtained. But if you could convince them that there are better

things than luxury, and power, and applause, and ease, and that these more desirable ends could be attained without money, they would cease to care for money. Do you agree?"

"If you could convince them; but you cannot convince them."

"Well, let us leave that point, and see where we have arrived. You began by accepting the axiom that avarice is the strongest motive power of human nature. I have shown you that only misers love money. I have shown you that what the bulk of mankind desire is ease, and pleasure, and power, and applause.

"Now, power is like money; it is only valuable for what it will bring, and it is expected to bring pleasure and admiration. So with ease, it is another form of pleasure. Therefore, we may reduce our terms to two—pleasure and admiration; and we may say that the most active motive power in human nature, under present conditions, is the love of pleasure and admiration. I say under present conditions. I will tell you why I make that stipulation.

"As society is at present constituted, nearly every man gets as much money as he can. What are the ordinary motives for this conduct? Plutocrat says, 'I can make a fortune out of the cotton trade, and why should I not? If I don't make it, some other man will; and perhaps the other man will be a rogue.' You see, men cannot trust each other. Under the operation of unfettered individual enterprise, life is a scramble. A man knows he could live on less than ten thousand a year, and he knows that multitudes are hungry. But if he foregoes

the making of a fortune it will not benefit the poor. Some other man will seize on what he relinquishes, and the scramble will go on. So men amass wealth because they think they might as well do it as let another do it in their stead.

"There is another thing. Plutocrat will tell you he has a wife and family to provide for. He knows the world too well to leave a widow and children to the tender mercies of his brother graspers. It is every man for himself, and the weakest to the wall. So he will grind other people to make money to prevent other people from grinding his children. He is right in a great measure. It is his duty to provide for his wife and children. And under our present system of robbery and murder by individual enterprise the widow and the orphan will find none to pity and defend them—unless they can pay for value received.

"Again, in a commercial era and in a commercial nation wealth is the reward of merit, the crown of honour, and the sign of virtue. Every Englishman dreads failure. Wealth stamps him with the hall-mark of success, and truly that hall-mark is borne by some very spurious metals; some most evident Brummagem jewels.

"But this assumption is based upon an error. Wealth is not the hall-mark of merit. The most gifted and virtuous are not the most wealthy. Many of the richest have neither gifts nor virtue. Amongst the world's best and greatest women and men it would be hard to find one who ever possessed the wealth of a

Chicago packer of diseased meat. Probably the king of a Yankee iron or meat or railway trust has more wealth than ever fell to the lot of a hundred of the worthiest and noblest of the human race from Jesus Christ to Darwin."

"Well, you cannot alter human nature."

"I do not propose to try. It is only necessary to make the best of human nature as it stands. And to do that it is only necessary to alter the conditions."

"And you think people can be persuaded to agree with these new and untried theories?"

"They are *not* new, and they are *not* untried. And in the first place I want to show you that you do not believe your own axiom."

"What do you mean?"

"You say that unless men are bribed with wealth they will not do their best; that only for payment can we get the best services of the best men."

"Certainly."

"And then you oppose the payment of members of Parliament, because to pay members would be to lower the tone and impair the *personnel* of the House. Payment of members would open the way to a horde of mercenary, self-seeking adventurers. You hold that men of the highest character and the greatest talent have always served the state for the sake of duty and of honour; and that such men work better for honour than for money."

"Again: they are exceptional men."

"Still more exceptions. Tell me: do you find the amateur cricketer or football player less keen or faithful than the paid player? Do

you believe that the crews in the University boat race do not row their best and try their hardest? Do you trust the skill and devotion of the lifeboat men? And how do you explain the existence of the yeomanry and the volunteers?"

"But you propose that all men should be on a level. You would pay the doctor no more than the docker. Do you expect that to result in anything but deterioration?"

"I expect it to work, as it does work now, the whole world over, successfully. But now let us go and see the building of a new bridge over the Irwell, and we will discuss that question by the way."

CHAPTER ELEVEN
A TALK ON THE BRIDGE

THE three followed the line of the stream for half a mile, then paused a while on the centre of an old stone bridge, its grey front starred with golden lichen, and watched the evolutions of a shoal of roach in the clear water. The fish, a full fathom below the surface, moved "in wavering morrice" amongst the slim reeds and delicate water grasses. Every scale on their silver sides, every quiver of their coral gills, every ripple of their pearly fins, could be distinctly seen as they curved and glided in and out amongst the tall green stalks, their mouths opening and closing stupidly, and their great flat, dim eyes staring; and below them could be seen the dappled bed of the brook, with here a gleam of sunlight from a polished pebble, and there a bubble sparkling like a gem. Suddenly a water vole dropped into the stream with a plop, and the shoal sprang outwards in a star-like radiation of sparks of silvery light, and were gone.

"By George!" said the General, "that was sharp. Looked like the bursting of a shell. By Jove!"

"It was a pretty sight," said the wizard, "and this must be very pure and sweet water."

"Hah!" The General took out his cigar case. "Jorkle said just now that you proposed to pay the doctor no more than the docker. Is that so?"

The wizard, smiling, asked, "Why not?"

"Why not? Hah! What kind of doctors would you get? Hah! It's absurd!"

"Well," said the wizard, "put it the other way about, and say that the docker is paid as much as the doctor."

"But—but it's the same thing, by Jove!"

"No, General. For when you say it is absurd that a doctor should be paid no more than a docker you are presuming that a docker is not well paid. That is to say, you are confusing the idea of our present England with the idea of this England. With us a labourer is badly paid, badly fed, badly clothed, badly housed, and badly educated; and you are supposing that in this ideal country a doctor will fare as badly as a docker fares with us.

"But here the labourer is well fed, well housed, well clothed, well educated, and well respected. The labourer in this England has, in fact, everything that is necessary to a happy, healthy, and honourable human life. And if the labourer has everything that is good for him, what can the doctor want more?"

"But—hah—hang it all, what encouragement is there for a man to become a doctor, don't you know?"

"Let me ask you a question. Suppose a collier were paid as well as a major-general,

would you be willing to give up your profession and go to work in a coal pit?"

"Hah! No! No, of course not!"

"Exactly. So that you feel that there is some other attraction besides the mere rate of wages."

"But," said Mr. Jorkle, "that is a superficial argument. A doctor needs an expensive education. A docker does not."

"To be sure," said the wizard, "and the community pays for the doctor's education, and keeps him while he acquires it. Therefore, the community is not in his debt on that score."

"Yes, yes," said the General, "but, my good man, to be a doctor, or an editor, or a statesman, or an artist, a man has to work harder than he has, don't you know, to be a labourer. Isn't it right that he should be paid for his extra labour, and—hah—that sort of thing?"

The wizard nodded. "Good, General, very good," said he, "and I will not pretend that a man who works for ten hours a day does not confer on the community more than one who works for five hours a day, nor will I pretend that a man of genius is of no more value to the community than a man of normal intelligence."

"Very well, then. Hah! That seems to settle it. Hah! You admit that it is just that a man who is worth more should be paid more, and that sort of thing?"

"You suggest that we should pay the superior person superior wages because he confers extra benefits upon us."

"Exactly."

"But suppose we feel that by paying a lot of money to one who is a benefactor we convert him into a menace or an injury to the community. Suppose we feel that to give a benefactor riches is to make the boon into a bane."

"But—er—justice is justice," said Mr. Jorkle; "a man must be paid the value of his labour."

"Well," the wizard answered, "you do not suppose that we should pay for anything we do not get; but only for what we do get."

"Of course."

"And do not pretend that we are to accept a man's services if we would rather decline them?"

"No."

"Well. Suppose we say to the doctor, 'we would rather not employ you than make you a rich man. Go, then, and doctor yourself!' Or, suppose we say to the poet, 'We would rather not give you riches for your songs. Go, then, and sing them to yourself.' How would the doctor and the poet fare then?"

"But that would be foolishness."

"Not at all. We have to consider the good of the community. If a rich man is a danger to the community we are within our right in refusing riches to any member of the community."

"Then you would have no doctors?"

"It does not follow. There would be men able and willing to do that or any other kind of work, on the terms we offer."

"Then you would be exploiting those men?"

"Well, yes. You must remember that we do not compel a man to confer upon us the benefit

of his genius. But what he has to give must be given: we do not buy."

"Hah! That seems beastly unfair, don't you know?"

"Unfair! It's—er—it's robbery."

"Pardon me. The community says to the genius: 'We have decided to conduct this commonwealth upon certain lines. If you like to conform to the rules made for the general good and the general safety, you are welcome to abide with us. If not, you are at liberty to go elsewhere. If you care to give we shall be glad to accept. If you do not care to give we shall not take.' What right has the genius to complain of such terms? Where is the robbery?"

Mr. Jorkle swelled with indignation. "Then," said he, "you Socialists are prepared to accept services without paying for them?"

The wizard laughed. "The folly of all theories of value," he said, "lies in the attempt to reduce all human relations to terms of money. You cannot pay for all services in money, because there are some services that cannot be counted in money."

"Hah! What services?" asked the General.

"Suppose, General," said the wizard, "that you were young and single, with an income of five thousand a year. And suppose you loved a very beautiful and sweet woman. And suppose she was willing to marry you, although a man with five hundred thousand a year had proposed to her."

"Well?"

"Would you marry her?"

"Of course, I should."

"Would you think you had done wrong to marry her, when she could have married a richer man?"

"Hah! Assuming that she—hah—cared for me," said the General, "I should think I did quite right to marry her. By George!"

"Very well. You would exploit her. But suppose she said to you: 'I love you better than any other man, but Mr. Blank will pay me more to marry him than you can pay me.' Would you honour and admire her as much as if she gave herself for love?"

"Of course not."

"Would you think it quite right, and proper, and pleasant for your mother, your friend, or your wife to ask you to pay for every kiss or kindness—in money?"

"Hah! Hang it, no."

"Could you reckon up in money how much a mother, a sister, a comrade, or a child is worth to you?"

"Hah! What beastly rot."

"If you brought in a wounded comrade off the field of battle, under fire, would you expect to be paid—in money?"

"Hah! The idea!"

"Could you reckon up the value of William Shakespeare or Horatio Nelson in L. S. D.?"

"Pooh!"

"Do you believe that James Watt, Christopher Columbus, Sir Francis Drake, George Stephenson, Lord Clive, Caxton, Rembrandt, and Beethoven received the full value of their services—in money?"

"Of course not."

"Suppose the value could have been estimated in millions, and paid to them, do you suppose they would have been better off with a thousand millions than with one million?"

"Perhaps not. Hah! Enough is as good as a feast."

"Enough is better than a feast. And now I will give you a line of poetry from Swinburne's 'Child's Song,' which throws a flood of light upon all theories of value. It is this:

> Gold is worth but gold.
> Love's worth love.

And now let us go back to the subject of our treatment of the superior persons. In a community like this every man—*every* man—has all that a man needs. Would it be reasonable for the superior person to sulk and refuse to benefit his fellows because he was refused more than he needed? If we give him all the essentials to a healthy and happy human life; if we give him esteem and love to boot, what can he ask for more? There is nothing he can take or we can give. He has all life can yield.

"And, again, it is a mistake to suppose that a man of genius works for money. His incentive is not gain—it is genius. The reward of the giver is in giving. The reward of the artist is his art. The singer, the painter, the healer, the discoverer, must sing, or paint, or heal, or discover. In no other way can he be happy. You don't need telling that such men as Bruno, Galileo, Copernicus, Luther, St. Paul, Cromwell, and Darwin did their work not only

without encouragement and without pay, but in despite of opposition, of vilification, of persecution, of torture even, and peril of death.

"The genius is the spoilt child of Nature. He has joy in his work, in his gifts, in his power. You might pay a Shelley to sing, or a Nelson to fight, or a Rubens to paint, or a Spencer to think, but no wealth you could heap upon such men would suffice to bribe them to cease to work, or to study, or to sing. It *is* more blessed to give than to receive, and why should a man be paid by men because he has been more blessed by Nature?"

"Hah! There's something in what you say. But—hah—it seems to me to apply only to exceptional men."

"And it is of exceptional men we are speaking. But I think you are wrong, and that it is true of all women and men under natural conditions."

"Nonsense!" cried Mr. Jorkle.

"Well," said the wizard, "let us see. I will cite a quite common and familiar instance. Both you gentlemen have been present at many parties in your own homes or in the homes of friends. You will notice at these parties that the clever guests entertain the less gifted. That is to say, one guest sings, another plays accompaniments, another performs juggling or conjuring or other parlour tricks, and so on. But did you ever find at any party that the amateur tenor, or baritone, or pianist, or reciter, or violinist asked to have two dinners and a double or treble allowance of wine and cigars because two-thirds of the guests merely acted as audience or spectators?"

"Hah! But, hang it, that is amongst friends."

"Just so. And what is possible in a small gathering of friends is possible in a large community of friends—as a Socialist commonwealth must be."

"And, pray," asked Mr. Jorkle, "how, in such a perfect brotherhood, are you going to allot the work? How do you persuade a man that he is to be a road-mender, and not a civil engineer; a mason, and not an architect; a printer, and not an author?"

"Why," asked Mr. Fry, "how do you persuade a member of a college eleven that he is to field at long on and not at point, that he is to go in ninth and not first, that he is to keep wicket and not bowl? In an amateur choral society, how do you convince a tenor that he is to sing in the chorus and not to take the solos? But come, let us go on to the new bridge which is building, and put some of your questions to the workmen. Light!"

"Sir?"

"The flying machine."

"Yes, sir."

CHAPTER TWELVE
A QUESTION OF FINANCE

THE bridge, a noble stone structure, was nearly finished. As the three approached they came upon a mason engaged in facing a large block of marble. Close to him, upon a scaffold overhanging the river, a younger man was chiselling the face of a water nymph.

The wizard stepped up to the mason and came to the point at once. "My friend," he said, "I should be greatly obliged if you would answer me a question. I ask, not out of curiosity, but because these friends, who are travellers from over sea, have some difficulty in understanding English methods."

The mason stopped working, and looked at the strangers with some wonder, and perhaps a little amusement. "Ask what you please, friend," he said, smiling.

"Well," said Mr. Fry, "my friends see you doing plain mason's work, and a younger man doing sculptor's work, and they do not quite understand that. They ask why you are content to work as a mason while another man works as a sculptor."

The mason looked from one of the visitors

to the other with a puzzled and doubtful smile. "I don't," said he, "quite understand, I'm afraid. I am a mason. George, there, is a sculptor. Each does his own work, of course."

"But," said Mr. Jorkle, "*why* are *you* a mason, and why is *he* a sculptor?"

The mason rubbed his chin, and glanced at the sculptor. "Well," he said, "we cannot all be sculptors, or the bridge would never be built."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Jorkle; "but why do you consent to do the rougher work and leave another man the art work?"

"Why?" The mason laughed, and the sculptor smiled and looked over the parapet to listen. "Why?" asked the mason. "I should think that needs no telling. George does the art work because he is an artist. I do the plainer work because I am not an artist."

"But," said Mr. Jorkle, "do you think that is fair?"

"Well, friend," the mason answered, "your questions astonish me, I must say. Do you ask me if it is fair for a man to do the work he is best fitted for?"

"But," Mr. Jorkle persisted, "don't *you* want to be a sculptor?"

The mason and the sculptor looked at each other and laughed. Then the former said, "No; I don't want to be a sculptor; and I could not be one if I did want."

Mr. Jorkle considered for a moment. Then he said, "But why do you consent to be a mason?"

"Well," answered the mason, with the same

look of amused surprise on his bronzed face, "I'm doing this work because it wants doing, and because I like to work in the open air."

"Do you mean to say you *like* the work?" asked Mr. Jorkle.

"Well enough," said the mason. "The bridge was wanted and, of course, we like to see it done, and done well."

And you don't ask for better work?"

"Better work? I think I can guess what you mean. Did you ever see a band where all the violinists played first fiddle?"

"Of course not."

"Well? The second fiddles and the second trombones play their parts, and the conductor does his business; and the whole band are satisfied if they play the piece well. You don't expect the hundred and fifty men and women to refuse to play because they cannot all be conductors, do you. Are you making fun of us?"

"No, no," said Mr. Fry. "We are not making fun of you. Our friend thinks every man will naturally want to lead."

"Well," said the sculptor, "that is the queerest idea I have come across for a long time. Jack, here, bowls for Lancashire. I am only a change bowler. Do you think I shall want to go on first when he is a far better bowler? We want to win the match."

"And build our bridge," said the mason.

"And are you contented," asked Mr. Jorkle, "to go on all your life chipping stone blocks?"

"Oh, I did not say that," said the mason. "I've been two voyages to India and one to

New Zealand; and sometimes I go and work on the corn lands, or do a little roofing."

"But don't you wish for more intellectual work?"

The mason shook his head. "Why should I?" he asked. "I have no leaning that way. I like to do plain work, and when I've finished I like a game of cricket or football, or a ramble in the country. George is fond of art and books; and we both grow roses. But, of course, George spends a lot of time over his sculpture. He will work here hours after I've gone home to the garden." The mason smiled and resumed his work as though there were no more to be said. Mr. Fry thanked him, and the three walked on.

"And what," asked the wizard, "did you think of our friend the mason, Mr. Jorkle?"

"He was a very unambitious man," said Mr. Jorkle.

"And I think," answered the wizard, "that he emphasised a common error of the political economist."

"In what way?"

"Why, the average man is *not* ambitious; is not rapacious. The average man likes an easy and pleasant life, and does not want to be bothered."

"Hah! Do you think so," asked the General.

"Certainly," said the wizard; "and that is why it is so easy for a few greedy or ambitious men to get the money, or the lead, and keep it."

"And does not that show," said Mr. Jorkle, "that equality is impossible?"

"Well," said the wizard, smiling, "it may

show that. But it certainly does not prove what you were trying to prove: that without the whip of poverty or the spur of greed all men would want to be kings."

"Hm!" Mr. Jorkle puffed out his cheeks and stopped half-way across the bridge. "Perhaps you will now answer me a question as to ways and means. If all the people in this Utopia have abundance, it follows that they must consume more than is consumed in—say, England. Therefore more must be produced. Increased production means increased labour. Yet you say these people only work a few hours a day. How do you account for that?"

"Hear, hear! Well put, Jorkle," cried the General.

The wizard took out his snuff-box and looked slily at his two friends. "So," he said, "I have been expecting that question. Let us sit here on this seat in the sunshine while I answer it."

"Hah! It seems to me you have got a tough task, don't you know," said the General.

The wizard took a pinch of snuff. "It is not a hard question at all," he said, "but my answer will take some time." He looked thoughtfully at the river for a few moments, and the General lit a cigar.

"Now," said the wizard, "you are tacitly admitting that in our England the majority of the people have not enough of the necessaries of life. And you suggest that if they are to have enough they must produce more. Eh?"

"Certainly."

"It is not certain, however. For if we

assume that a great deal of the wealth produced in our England is wasted, it may be possible, by stopping the waste, to supply all the wants without extra labour.

"And again. If in our England it is true that millions of men and women produce nothing at all, it may be possible, by setting all to work, to produce enough for all without increasing the labour of the present workers.

"And, again, by a more general and judicious use of labour-saving machinery it may be possible to produce more wealth with less labour."

"Well?"

"Very good. Let us first look into the question of waste. In our England we pay 275 millions in rent. Here there is no rent. In our England we pay 340 millions in interest. Here there is no interest. In our England we pay some 200 millions in profits. Here there are no profits.

"Now, add those sums together, and we get a total of 815 millions. Reckon the average workman's wage, at thirty shillings a week, of £75 a year, and we find that in our country we pay, under these three heads alone, the earnings of nearly eleven millions of men. All that is wasted.

"But that does not exhaust the tale of our waste. We waste also 196 millions in drink. We waste many millions in tobacco and cigars. We waste something like 70 millions on soldiers, sailors, ships, guns, and ammunition. All that is saved here. Then in our England we waste more millions upon judges, lawyers,

prisons, and police. Here they save all that.

"In our England, again, we spend a vast amount of money on banks, coinage, bank notes, cheques, book-keepers, cashiers, commercial travellers, overseers, commission agents, time-keepers, and other middle men. Here all that is saved.

"And in our England we spend more millions upon insurance; and we spend a lot upon pensions, and the Royal Family. Here all that is saved.

"And in our England there is an immense expenditure of money on churches, and ministers, and missionaries. Here no man takes his religion from paid preachers.

"And in our England the competitive system exposes us to much waste of labour and money: as, to mention a common example, there will be six milkmen delivering milk in one street, while only one postman delivers all the letters.

"And, again, there is the enormous waste of money in advertisements.

"Then in this country the people do not eat flesh meat of any kind; and it is very much cheaper, and healthier, to live on a vegetable diet.

"And in our England there are millions of idle persons, all of whom have to be clothed and lodged and fed at the expense of the industrious producer.

"For instance, in London alone there are nearly one hundred thousand persons in workhouses, prisons, hospitals, or lunatic asylums.

All these persons, and those who govern, or guard, or attend upon them have to be maintained.

"In London alone there are eighty thousand unemployed, thirty thousand vagrants, and as many abandoned women. These people produce nothing; but they are all consumers.

"Now, in this country there are no paupers, no beggars, no tramps, no thieves, no drunkards, no abandoned women, and no unemployed.

"There are in this country fewer sick, fewer infirm, fewer insane, therefore there are fewer nurses and doctors.

"You can see for yourself how enormous the saving must be here.

"But now consider the question of the numbers employed. In our England there must be quite five millions of adults who produce nothing.

"You think that figure excessive. But consider. We have one million adults who have not even a pretence of any employment. We have nearly two millions of domestic servants. We have nearly half a million of soldiers, sailors, and pensioners. We have still larger armies of tramps, thieves, beggars, paupers, prisoners, policemen, jailors, lawyers, parsons, lunatics, sick, deformed, and unemployed. We have the legion butchers, graziers, poulterers, the fishermen, book-keepers, publicans, barmaids, potmen, brewers, advertisement canvassers, and all the rest.

"Then we have all the jockeys, flunkeys, tailors, milliners, jewellers, perfumers, upholsterers, artists, gardeners, florists, ladies'

maids, coachmen, huntsmen, and countless others who wait upon and work for the idle rich.

"Here all these crowds of men and women are usefully employed. Need I point out the great increase in the producers, which these facts imply?

"But there is yet another point to be made. In our country the improvement and use of machinery is left to chance and private enterprise. Here the whole nation is concerned in the matter of producing and distributing necessary things. You can easily imagine that under such circumstances this people must have made immense advances in all matters of labour-saving and wealth-producing machinery.

"We find, then, that certainly not half of our population is engaged in the production of necessaries. We find that of their gross production more than two-thirds are wasted. We find that here all that waste is saved, and that the whole population is regularly and wisely employed; and we find that the labour-saving appliances here are infinitely better than our own.

"Well, estimating from the capacity of the best machinery in use in our countries, Mr. Atkinson, an American statistician, declares that one man can produce bread for one thousand; that one man can produce cotton cloth for 250 persons; and that one man can make boots and shoes for 1,000 persons.

"Why, then, should it be necessary for the people in this country to work hard or for long hours?

"To give you an example of the amounts wasted by the idle rich in our England, let me take the case of a millionaire's yacht, built at a cost of £150,000. Such a yacht uses up the year's labour of 2,000 men for one year. Reckoning the average wage at 30s. weekly.

"Now, supposing one man capable of producing bread for one thousand persons, it follows that the two thousand men employed on that yacht would produce bread for two millions of persons.

"This will give you an idea of the saving effected in this country, where everybody works, where nobody wastes, and where the machinery is of the very best.

"You may say that in this country there are twice as many people working as in our country. You may say that they are healthier, stronger, abler, and more willing than our workers. You may say that their machinery is twice as good as ours. And you may add to that the saving of our enormous waste.

"Consider these facts, and tell me why these people should not be able to provide themselves with abundance at the cost of four hours' work a day for each man."

The wizard paused, and took another pinch of snuff.

The General knocked the ashes off his cigar, and looked inquiringly at Mr. Jorkle.

Mr. Jorkle coughed. "It wants thinking about," said he. "It is a question of figures."

"It is, I think," said Mr. Fry, "a question of common sense."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
THE NAVVIES

ELL, General," said the wizard, tapping his snuff-box, "here are your men of might, broad-built, brawny, and big; knights of the pick and spade. How do they like you?"

The General put up his monocle, and glared critically at the men: a party of navvies at work in a cutting. "Hah!" said he, "this is something like it. These are the fellows that make a country into a nation, begad!"

There were some two hundred men at work. They ran tall, and broad, and were muscular and brown. Around their wrists they wore the professional strap; around their legs, below the knees, the professional thongs. They were dressed in the good old fashion: in moleskin trousers and blue or woollen grey shirts; were mostly bareheaded, and wore their collars open at the throat.

They worked, as is the manner of the craft, steadily and deftly, without haste and without pauses, planting their heavily-shod feet solidly, and putting the weight and power of their ponderous shoulders into the push and heave of the spades.

"They are very like our own men," said the General, "except, by George, their faces. Hah! Yes. Their faces are finer, don't you know."

"Of course," said the wizard; "they are educated men; cultured, many of them."

"Cultured!" exclaimed Mr. Jorkle. "But, of course, I forgot, even the dustmen in this place are perfect gentlemen."

The wizard consulted his watch. "It is close upon lunch time," he said; "I should suggest that we disembody ourselves. Then we can listen to their talk. Do you object?"

"Oh, not at all," said the General; "this isn't a ballroom, dash it all."

As he spoke a youth rose up from behind a heap of earth and began to ring a hand-bell, mellow and full-toned, and not unlike a sheep-bell, but louder.

At this sound the men stopped working and drew off to the opposite side of the cutting, where they began to wash their hands at troughs, laid, apparently, for that purpose.

These ablutions completed, the navvies formed into groups, and began their lunch, and the three drew near to one party and stood to listen to their talk.

The talk was begun by a red-haired giant, who was seated on a heap of stones. This man said to another, almost as big as himself, but black-haired and sallow, "I see you are home again, Ullathorne. Where have you been wandering this time, and how has the world used you?"

The dark man looked at the speaker and said, "I've been in Germany. Didn't you

know? I went to sing at a festival in Stuttgart, and I took it into my head to walk through the Black Forest country, and sing for my supper."

"There are bonny wenches in that country, Frank," remarked a burly, bearded man, who sat near.

"There are in all countries, I give thanks," said Ullathorne, smiling; "and I daresay that is what Arthur Shirley wants to hear about."

"Rubbish!" said the giant; "tell *me* about the Guest Houses. Have they anything out of the common in that line?"

"Very good, very good indeed," said Ullathorne; "quaint, high-gabled houses with plenty of clever carving. The best of them is at a little town near Stuttgart—I forget the name. There were some Japanese travellers put up there a couple of years ago, and they decorated the principal sitting-room in their own fashion. You can almost hear the birds sing, and see the flowers nod in the wind."

"Ah," said Shirley, "there's a new guest house at Oldham since you went away, Frank. It stands right amongst the tulip beds, and looks like a crystal beehive. The dining-room is circular, and the panels are painted with children and women alternately. Some of the children were painted by Dora Sutcliffe; she was half a year at the work. And you know what *they* will be like."

"If they are like Dora they will be worth seeing," said Ullathorne.

"They are wonderful," said Shirley. "*I* think they are great. What do *you* say, Jack Ferguson, you have seen them?"

The man addressed, a fine, jolly fellow of thirty-five, who was peeling apples as though he loved them, glanced at Ullathorne and laughed. "Oh," he said, "Dora Sutcliffe paints bairns well, none better, and Frank will be the last man in the world to deny it. But the finest guest house I've ever stayed at is at Nice."

"Yes, yes," said Shirley, "the one with the Odyssey pictured in the hall. I've heard of it."

"Oh, I say, Arthur," said the bearded man, "have you seen the new translation of the Odyssey?"

"You mean the one by Miss Pearce, I suppose?" said Shirley. "No, I'm not much of a bookworm. It's good, isn't it?"

"Wonderful," said the bearded one. "It's the real thing. The real, impossible, miraculous thing. It gives the literal story, and it gives the spirit and the movement and the music of the Greek. And done by a girl!"

"Which Miss Pearce is it?" asked Ullathorne.

"Oh, *the* Miss Pearce," Fergusson answered, "Stella Mary Pearce; no other."

"What!" exclaimed Ullathorne, "the gargoyle girl?"

"Yes," said the man of the beard, "the same. She must be a reincarnated Greek. Those gargoyles are unique."

"True," remarked Shirley. "I saw some on a hall at York. Never saw such funny faces in my life."

"Oh, by the by, what is this about Frank Donne and Marie Summerscale?" asked Ullathorne.

"Haven't you heard?" asked Fergusson.

"No."

Fergusson shrugged his shoulders and frowned. "Tell him, Arthur," he said.

But Shirley said, "No. You tell him, Philip."

"How much do you know?" the bearded man inquired of Ullathorne.

"Nothing definite," was the answer; "a tragedy, I heard. What is it?"

"H'm! It's a sad affair," said Philip. "You knew Donne, didn't you?"

"Yes. Well. He was a splendid chap."

Philip nodded gravely. "He was," he said. "Well, you know that he was married to Miss Summerscale?"

"Of course. That's two years ago."

"Yes. Well, they were very happy. And when they had been married about a year they went to live in Kent, at Ashford."

"Yes."

"One day Mrs. Donne was walking through the woods and she met Percy Langdale. Did you know him?"

"No."

"Well. He was a Manchester man, and had known Marie Summerscale when they were both children. He had gone to manage a farm in the Weald of Kent some years before. And they met in the wood that day by accident, if there is such a thing as accident."

"There's such a thing as Fate," said a serious, quiet man, who sat close by.

"Fate? Call it that if you like, Will. Anyhow, Donne's wife and Percy met in a green

glade, and their souls ran together like quicksilver."

"Oh, oh, oh," Ullathorne sighed softly.

"That's how it was," said Philip; "they wandered along together in a dream. They parted, and went their ways. What they felt, or said, or did, what sort of a fight they fought with Fate, no man knoweth. But the trial was too hard for them, and they went away in a month."

"She left poor Donne? *She* did, little Marie?" said Ullathorne.

Philip nodded. "So it was," said he, "and that isn't the worst, as you will have heard."

"They were lost at sea!" said Ullathorne.

"Yes. In the Channel. All three. Marie and Percy had left for America from Dover. Somewhere in the Channel, off Beachy Head, in a rough sea, Marie fell overboard. Langdale jumped in after her. Just then poor Donne, who had come out on the same boat to try to part them, came on deck. He shouted to the officer on the bridge and then jumped over also. And that was the end. The ship was going full speed. There was a heavy sea, and it was dark. Nothing was ever heard or seen of them again."

"Terrible, terrible!" said Ullathorne.

"Yes. You may say so, Frank," said Shirley. "Donne was a splendid fellow, and Marie was as pretty as a bunch of roses in a silver vase. And to think of their being whiffed out like that before they had learnt the taste of life. It was hard fortune."

"Ah," said Philip "yes, if that was the end.

But, you know, I cannot believe it is the end. And I feel sure that those two poor young things will be happy yet."

"Perhaps," said Ullathorne; "but if not, poor Donne met a hard fate."

"And so did Marie," said Philip.

"Well"—Ullathorne spoke doubtfully—"it's not a new story; it has happened before, and will again; but I must own that I don't understand it."

"What don't you understand?" asked Philip.

Ullathorne frowned thoughtfully. "I don't understand those sudden and violent passions," he said. "Why didn't Langdale go away?"

"He did go away," said Philip; "but he came back."

"He must have been very weak," said Ullathorne.

"Weak?" Philip paused and looked thoughtfully, then he turned to the quiet man. "Come, William the Silent," he said, "what is your opinion?"

The whole company looked hard at William. From a man habitually silent wisdom is expected.

William shook his head. "Philip," said he, in a quiet voice, "*you* know, without asking me. Shirley here does not care for books; you do."

"What of it?" Shirley asked.

"Men differ," said William, laconically.

"Explain, silent one, explain," demanded Shirley.

William fixed his soft, kind gaze upon the

giant. "Frank Ullathorne," he said, "would have gone away, and wouldn't have come back."

"Of course," said Ullathorne; "then, why did Langdale go back?"

"Ah, my lad, my lad," said William, "Langdale was in love."

"And suppose I had been in love?" asked Ullathorne.

"You"—William shook his head—"you would never be in love as Langdale was. And, besides, *she* was in love with *him*."

"But," cried Ullathorne, "do you mean that a man and a woman are helpless slaves—to love?"

"*Some* men, and some women," said William, "and some love."

"Well," said Ullathorne, "it seems impossible to me. I cannot realise it."

William stroked his strong chin and looked serious. "It is a hard puzzle, men," said he; "it's a puzzle as old and inscrutable as death and eternity. You are very sure of yourself, Frank. And I know you are a calm, strong man, and not passionate and emotional as some men are. But, forgive me if I express a doubt."

"Oh, be candid," said Frank. "What is your doubt?"

"I doubt *you*," said William. "I mean that, cool and firm as you are, you could not, in my opinion, have kept away, under certain circumstances."

"You mean if I had loved the woman as much as Langdale loved her?"

William shook his head. "No," he said,

"I mean if *she* had loved you as she loved him."

Ullathorne stood up, brushing away the crumbs from his clothes. "I don't think I'm as weak as you think," said he.

"Ah!"—William smiled—"but are you sure that in such cases it is the weak who fall?"

"What do you mean?"

"I think the weak often stand, just because their passions are not strong enough to overthrow them,"

"Then you think Marie—poor child—was stronger than a woman who remains a loyal wife?"

"I don't know. These things, as the old Greeks used to say, are on the knees of the gods. It must have been a great love that carried those two off their feet, and great loves don't live in little hearts."

At this moment the youth struck again upon the bell, and the men rose and moved away to their work. As they went, Philip said to Shirley: "If we get along as well as we have got along so far, we shall have this job finished a week sooner than we hoped."

"I think we shall," the big man answered; "but I'm sad when I think of Percy Langdale. He was a good friend, and a good man."

"There is another life," said Philip.

"I think not," said Shirley; and the shovels began to move again, and Ullathorne, as he strode to his place, sang in a rich, sonorous baritone voice an old song of the sea.

"Well," said the General, "hah! I keep

getting surprises. Who the dickens would expect navvies to talk like that?"

"I should judge from the conversation," said Mr. Jorkle, "that this highly moral people are very little better than their neighbours."

"Oh, hang it, Jorkle," cried the General, "what a Puritan you are! I think the men talked men's talk, don't you know. Hah! What do you expect of flesh and blood, begad?"

"I expect," said Mr. Jorkle, "some decent feeling and proper conception of morality. Have these people any kind of religion?"

"Oh, come," said the General, "don't try to sell us a lame horse! I've seen a good many religions in my time, but I never saw one that—hah!—didn't leave room for a sprinkling of sinners. And—hah!—I have found the society of the saints rather a demnition bore at times."

"You are a heathen, General," said Mr. Jorkle. "But you, Mr. Fry, what have you to say for your paragons? Did you notice that during the whole course of that—er—edifying discussion nobody said a single word of condemnation of the crime?"

"I did, sir," said the wizard, "but I also noticed that there was a great deal of pity and sympathy, which, I submit, are much better things."

"I don't agree with you," said the financier.

"I am sorry," said the wizard.

The General laughed.

"And I think," said Mr. Jorkle, warmly, "if

that is the kind of thing your Socialism leads to I should like to ask you to remember——"

"The—hah!—name of Sir Gorell Barnes, dammit," said the General.

"I think," said Mr. Fry, "we might do worse than lunch. Light!"

CHAPTER FOURTEEN
IN THE GUEST HOUSE

THE dining hall of the Guest House stood in the middle of a cherry orchard, and through its open casements floated in the delicate but searching perfume of the wonderful blossoms.

It was a large room, of oblong shape, with windows running in a band the whole length of the walls on both sides. Above the windows was a frieze of dim cobalt blue, with here and there a painted swallow flying. Below the windows the walls were grounded in dappled green of many tints, from apple to ivy, and against this dense retiring background were painted growing tulips of all the varied hues of that gracious flower: pearly and silver whites, shell pinks, rose reds, ruby, amber, citron, amethyst, buttercup yellow, frail violet, regal purple, glowing orange; the sunshine lighted them up like jewels. From the panelled-oak ceiling swung graceful copper lamps. The floor was of polished yew. There were many round tables placed about the room. These had tops of hammered copper, and across each one was thrown a narrow cloth of stainless white.

At one of these tables sat the Three. And when the lunch had been laid by two bright young boys, and when the invaluable Light had conjured long slim bottles from nowhere, and had vanished like the flame of a blown-out candle, the General held up a tall and taper glass, and looked affectionately through his monocle at the shining golden wine.

"Hah! There are times, don't you know," said the General, "when wine is as indispensable to a dinner as drums are to a march. I—hah!—drink is a devilish bad thing, don't you know, and—hah—no good to King or country. But, dash it all, life is so often a beastly bore, and one meets so many—hah—impossible persons; and what with blunt razors and damned Radicals, and the—hah, vagaries of the climate, one gets so hipped and raw, don't you know, and so disgusted, that—— Hah! dammit! a bottle of wine is a beneficent creation, and one of the kindest works of God, and —that sort of thing. Hah! Hum!"

The General beamed at the golden nectar, in which a point of light sparkled like a gem, spread his fingers benevolently over his waistcoat, drained the beaker of hermitage with respectful deliberation, smacked his lips, smiled, and said: "Hah! This is one of those auspicious occasions."

"Sir," said the wizard, smiling, "you have my most cordial sympathy. But still, as you say, drink is evil, and men are better without it."

The General nodded, and refilled his glass. "Men are," he said, "better, on the whole, with-

out it. But—hah—it is a thousand million pities, don't you know, that such divine elixirs as dry champagne and ripened port and chastened hermitage should serve one jade's tricks after all, like a lovely fickle woman. Hang it!"

"There are," said Mr. Fry, "certain mellow joys, and rosy dreams, and glowing inspirations, which Dionysus alone of all the gods seems able or willing to bestow. And, as you say, General, there are ragged and peevish moments when one is grateful for the power to cast that dreamy veil of rose colour betwixt one's weary soul and the ugly meanness of the workaday world. And—when it comes to a cigar!"

The General sighed.

"Pooh! Rubbish!" exclaimed Mr. Jorkle. "I see no such wonders in this stuff. Drink is well enough, and does no great harm if people are moderate. But you are a pagan epicure, General, and I'm afraid Mr. Fry is as bad."

"Hah!" cried the General, "listen to Mr. Faith-and-Works Jorkle! Listen to the Smite-the-Amalakites-Financier! Hang it, Jorkle, you never give thanks. You are one of those fellows who wouldn't raise his hat to 'Rule Britannia.' You'd pass the saluting point with a pipe in your mouth. You despise a girl's liking for chocolate, and expect a handsome woman to be happy in a frock of last year's cut. If it comes to that, a goat doesn't care for strawberries. Our friend the sorcerer and I have palates, by Jove! You're a—hah!—blessed calculating machine, by George!—

Stick to your last, my dear man; heckle the wizard. Hah! *We* will drink the wine."

"Upon my word, General," said the financier, "you seem to have the gift of tongues; but, if I understand your sentiments, it appears to me they are not respectable."

"It is an old discord," said the wizard, "the old antagonism between the feudal spirit of chivalry and the commercial spirit of Mammonism. The General resents your utilitarian intolerance of human pleasure, your Puritanical intolerance of human weakness. There are some lines of Swinburne's that seem to express the feeling behind our revolt:

Wilt thou yet take all (Mr. Jorkle)? But these thou shalt not take,
The laurel, the palms, and the pæan, the breast of the nymphs in the brake;
Breasts more soft than a dove's, that tremble with tenderer breath,
And all the wings of the loves, and all the joys before death.

"And I hold that the General is right, and that if you take 'all the joys before death,' and offer us nothing but the reek of chimneys and a heap of money with which we may buy nothing but safes, and bonds, and coffins, you are tendering a very sorry bargain, and I, for one, will not deal with you."

"Hear! hear!" cried the General; "that's the idea. What's the good of money, don't you know, if nothing's worth buying?"

"Very well," answered Mr. Jorkle, "you have my permission to wallow in the epicurean stye,

and to write odes to the public-house. And, now, Mr. Fry, to return to your magic-lantern show of a Utopia, I should like to ask you whether you believe it possible to make England into a country like this?"

"Why not?" asked the wizard.

"Because," said Mr. Jorkle, "there are only two ways in which you could establish Socialism in England. One way is by means of a revolution; the other is by a gradual change in the laws. In the case of a revolution you would suddenly take the affairs of the nation out of the hands of experienced and capable managers, and hand them over to ignorant and incompetent men; the result of which would be failure. In the case of ultra-Socialist legislation, you would alarm the capitalists and they would take their capital out of the country."

"Good," said the General, "what do you say to that, Mr. Fry?"

"Well," said the wizard, "let us deal first with the results of a revolution. I don't believe there will ever be a revolution, and I don't consider such violent measures necessary. But suppose it came to that. You assume that the present rulers and wealth-holders have a monopoly of all executive knowledge and ability. I think you are mistaken."

"Tell us, then," said Mr. Jorkle, "who is to manage the business of the State after a sudden expulsion or displacement of the present managers?"

"We are to consider," said the wizard, "two chief problems. First, who is to conduct the Government? You will remember that after

the revolt of the American colonies against British rule the Americans formed a Government, and constructed a constitution. They managed very well without the heaven-sent legislators of King George's Parliament. And the French, after dethroning Napoleon III., seemed to have no difficulty in replacing his government.

"And you will know, as well as I, that the new men who enter a Cabinet or department generally work as well as those they replace. Mr. Birrell, Mr. Lloyd George, and Mr. John Burns seem to be as capable as their confrères, or their predecessors."

"Yes. But that is gradual replacement," said Mr. Jorkle.

"Very good. And you want some score of men to make up a government. Do you suppose the country could not find them? Or do you suppose that all the capable men would be against the revolution, and only the incapables for the revolution? If that were the case how could the revolution be successful?"

"It never would, begad!" said the General.

The wizard laughed. "But," said he, "we are supposing it has been successful, and that implies that in the ranks of the revolutionary party there must be many able men."

"Not necessarily able administrators," said Mr. Jorkle.

"Come, come," said the wizard, "you know very well, Mr. Jorkle, that the standard is not a very high one. You know that outside Parliament there are thousands of men as able as any M.P., and you know that brains are not

confined to any particular class. On the local governing bodies, in Parliament itself, in the trade union, and in the co-operative movement there are men of the working classes who have proved themselves the equals of the titled and the wealthy in matters of administration and management.

"And you know very well that in the commercial world there is hardly a single business to which one individual head is indispensable. The manager of a great railway, or shipping firm, or factory, or trust, may be a very able man. But he has to depend in a great measure upon his lieutenants, and in the event of his death or retirement the business would go on. But all this seems to me rather profitless discussion. Let us leave the case of revolution and consider the other and quieter means of establishing Socialism in this country. Your argument, I understand, is that the first steps towards establishing a Socialist State in England would so alarm the rich that they would take their capital out of the country."

"That is so," said Mr. Jorkle.

"And you really believe that, Mr. Jorkle?"

"Well," said the General, "I'm jolly well sure Jorkle would take his capital, and I'm quite as sure of myself, by George!"

"I am surprised," said the wizard, "to find two such men labouring under the delusion that it would be possible for them to take their capital out of the country. Do you really believe, gentlemen, that you, or the other capitalists could do what you suggest?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Jorkle.

"Hah! Confound it, *yes!*" said the General.

The wizard took a pinch of snuff. Then he said, "Mr. Jorkle, would you mind telling how your capital is made up—of what it consists?"

"Well, various investments," said Mr. Jorkle; "railways, cotton mills, house property, and shares in the South African mines. Chiefly those four things."

"And yours, General?"

"Mostly land. I've something in coal mines, and something in jute."

"Very good," said the wizard; "now, suppose you and all the other capitalists in England decided to take your capital out of the country. Mr. Jorkle has to carry away part of the permanent way and rolling stock of a railway; he has to carry away several cotton mills and their machinery, and some streets of houses. You, General, have to remove your landed estates, part of a coal mine, and a jute factory."

"Confounded nonsense!" cried the General.

"We should simply withdraw our capital," said Mr. Jorkle.

"What you are thinking of," said the wizard, "is the idea of selling your shares, and with the money setting up new businesses in some foreign country.

"But you would be anxious to sell because you believed that the businesses would be no longer profitable, or no longer safe. That being the case, who would be willing to buy?

"And supposing you could and did sell these concerns. Then the men who bought

them would replace your capital with their own, and so the capital would still be in the country, after all. *You* would have gone out of the country, but the capital would remain.

"But allow me to suggest a case. Suppose the nation decided to take over your house property, land, railways, and mines, by means of some system of compulsory purchase. What could you do? Foreigners would not buy your property at a higher price than the people offered you. You could not take the land and mines and mills and houses away. You could not take away nor sell the rents and profits to come.

"Many municipalities now make their own gas. Suppose *all* the municipalities began to make their own cotton goods, jute goods, boots, clothing, soap, and ironmongery. How could you prevent them making those things and selling and buying those things? What need they care if you shut down your mills and went to America or China?"

"But—hah!—that would be robbery, by George! It would be unjust, by Jove!" exclaimed the General.

"It would be immoral!" cried Mr. Jorkle.

"But," said the wizard, calmly, "we are not now discussing the morality of the transaction. That by and by. We are discussing the possibility of doing these things.

"Now, suppose you shut down your mills. The municipal mills will be rid of your competition. Your work-people will be working for the municipality, and your profits will have disappeared. What, then, can you take out of

the country? All your wealth is created by the workers. *They* will remain in the country and work to create wealth for themselves."

"But—but it is organised plunder!" said Mr. Jorkle.

"Never mind that. Suppose it to be organised, can you prevent it? Can you show me any reason why it should not succeed?"

"There would—hah—be bloodshed first," exclaimed the General, hotly.

"I don't see why," said the wizard, coolly. "You have seen the gas, trams, and waterworks pass from private hands into the control of the municipalities without bloodshed. Why should there be bloodshed over the cotton mills and soap factories?"

"It isn't honest, dammit!" cried the General.

"Wait a little. Suppose the people offered to buy your jute mills. You would want a fancy price."

"Not at all. I should want a fair price—an honest price."

"Well, that would be the price of the second-hand buildings and machinery: no more. To ask for twenty years' purchase of the profits of the concern would be absurd. That would be asking the people to pay twenty years' value of their own work. They are not going to buy their own skill, and their own bodies. Those are already their own property. So they can say: 'We will give you a second-hand price for the mills and machines. If that does not suit you we will build municipal mills and leave you.'"

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Jorkle, "but the workers

do not create *all* the value. Our administration counts for a great deal."

"You mean your management?"

"Yes."

"Very good. Then we propose to discharge you, and engage other managers, at lower salaries. What right have you to complain? You act in the same way towards those in your employ."

"I never heard such bosh in my life," said Mr. Jorkle, rudely.

"My dear sir," answered the wizard, taking another pinch of snuff, "you have all of you been all your lives labouring under a false idea. You think your capital employs the workers; it is the workers who employ your capital."

"Hah! Do you mean to say, sir," said the General, very red in the gills, "that you would defend the confiscation of my land?"

"There," said the wizard, "we come to the question of morality. I will discuss that with you presently; but now let us go out and smoke a cigar in the orchard."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN
UNDER THE CHERRY TREE

"APART from the dishonesty of Socialism," said Mr. Jorkle, pausing under a cherry tree, "I object to the idea because of its absurdity. It would result in stagnation, in retrogression. Abolish competition, and the world would drop back into ignorance and savagery. Struggle is the order of Nature; or, as a great thinker has expressed it: 'Society flourishes by the antagonism of its atoms.' The truth of that axiom is obvious." Mr. Jorkle looked at the General, and swelled with satisfaction.

"Good," said the wizard. "'Society flourishes by the antagonism of its atoms.' And you, like your great thinker, regard Society as a welter of blind forces: like a heap of maggots in a grease pot. You don't seem to be aware that the atoms of which Society is composed are thinking and feeling men and women. And you mistake aphorism for argument. It is quite easy to make such aphorisms. Allow me to offer you a few. War is better than peace. How do you like that? A house divided against itself shall stand. What say you? Union is weakness. These axioms are quite

as terse, and no more absurd, than that of your great thinker."

"Mere theory," said Mr. Jorkle.

"Well," answered the wizard, "let us be practical. If a hundred men had a hundred loaves of bread, and if they piled them in a heap and fought for them, so that some got none, and some got more than they could eat, and some were trampled upon in the scuffle, that would be competition. But it seems to me a wiser and better way would be to share the bread out equally, so that every man would get enough."

"Bah! I am talking about competition in trade," said Mr. Jorkle.

"Ah! And you think competition in trade is good because you always compare it with monopoly, and never with co-operation," said the wizard.

"What's that?" said the General, "I don't quite follow."

"I say," replied the wizard, "that seeing competition seems better, from your point of view, than monopoly, you rest content, and do not compare it with co-operation. For instance, we know that if a railway company has a monopoly of the traffic in a certain district the public is not so well served as where there are two competing lines. It is so in most cases. A firm which has a monopoly of trade can raise the prices and lower the quality of its goods. But let another firm enter into competition, and the public will get better goods at lower prices."

"That—hah—is just what we say," said the General.

"And it is true enough," said the wizard, "but though to the consumer of milk it may be better that there should be competition amongst milk dealers, we are not to conclude that competition is the *best* system; but only that it is better than monopoly.

"But there is another plan: that of co-operation. The private monopolist raises the price, and puts the profits in his pocket. But a municipal department for the supply of milk would always be better for the consumer than a private monopoly, or a system of private competition, because it could and would sell the milk at cost price."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Jorkle, "but it would increase the cost by inferior management."

"I think not," said the wizard. "I claim that it would decrease the cost. Of course, a milk trust, or private monopoly, would reduce the cost, because it would avoid the heavy charges for competition. And I am told that the New York Milk Trust began by dispensing with the services of fifteen thousand men. And where municipal departments have taken over the trams or the gas or water supply, it has been found possible to run the trams at reduced fares, to pay the employees better wages for shorter hours, and to hand over substantial balances in relief of rates. And it is evident that such co-operation must always beat private competition, for two reasons: the first reason is that the municipality can produce more cheaply; the second reason is that no private firm can afford to trade without making some

profit, whereas the municipality can do without any profit at all."

"And do you think it fair," exclaimed Mr. Jorkle, for a corporation to enter trade with the citizens' capital, against private dealers?"

"Why not?" said the wizard. "Is it fair for two men to trade as partners?"

"Of course it is."

"And is it fair for a hundred shareholders, or a thousand, to trade as a company?"

"Certainly."

"And is it fair for half-a-dozen companies, or private firms, to form a trust?"

"Why not?"

"But it is not fair for two hundred thousand citizens to form themselves into a municipal co-operative society and supply their own wants?'

"No. It is not fair to the private trader."

"The trust is fair to the private trader; but the municipal supply is not fair?"

"Certainly not."

"It is fair for the citizens to buy their milk of Smith and Company, or of Jones and Company, or of the Northern Milk Trust, or of the Amalgamated Dairy Company; or even to import tinned milk from abroad; and it is fair for the citizens to form new dairy companies, or new milk trusts; but it is *not* fair for them to call their milk trust a municipal milk supply."

"It is using public money to crush private enterprise."

"Then may I keep a cow and provide myself with milk?"

"That is another thing."

"Or may a whole street, or a whole district, club up to run a dairy and find their own milk?"

"That is different also."

"I see. It becomes unfair when *all* the streets and districts join, and organise the milk supply on the best lines. The citizens are not to combine, because the Trans-Atlantic Tinned Milk Trust want to sell their condensed milk, or because the Bucolic Dairy Company want to make dividends."

"Well: it is an interference with the liberty of the individual."

"I really fail to see that. The individual has a perfect right to offer milk for sale; but he has no right to compel me to buy it. On the contrary, I have a perfect right to combine with others to provide milk, and a perfect right to decline to buy it from any particular dealer. You do not think, do you, that the individual has an abstract right to make profits out of his fellow citizens against their will?"

"Hah! Look here," said the General, "that reminds me, don't you know. You seem to think that private profit is public loss. Hah! If a man gets wealth he has to spend it, and he finds useful employment, and—hah—increases trade, and that sort of thing."

The wizard laughed. "What! Isn't that old error dead yet?" he asked. "Do you really believe that the expenditure of the rich is good for the poor?"

"Hah! Of course it is, hang it. If I buy

a saddle it's good for the saddler," exclaimed the General.

"Excellent, excellent, General," said the wizard, "but you have omitted something."

"Hah! What have I omitted?"

"You have omitted the debit side of the account. Where does the money come from?"

"Come from? Out of my pocket, dammit."

"Yes. But how does it get into your pocket?"

"Why—hah——"

"Wait a moment, General. A landlord has a rent roll of £100,000 a year. Where does he get it? He gets it in rent from the farmers. They get the money by the sale of their produce. It is as much as they can do to make both ends meet. And the farm labourers, who raise all the produce, are very poor.

"Now, the landlord is rich. He is rich because the farmer and his men are poor: they are poor because he is rich.

"But the landlord buys a pair of boots from the village shoemaker. He finds him employment.

"And the labourer goes without boots.

"Well. The labourer earns the money, the shoemaker makes the boots, and the landlord wears them.

"Does that prove that the landlord is a useful member of Society? If the landlord did not take the labourer's earnings the labourer could buy boots, and so the shoemaker would have work, and the labourer be well shod.

"Suppose I said to a farmer, 'You give me five shillings a week out of your earnings, and

I will find employment for a man to make cigars. *I* will smoke the cigars.'

"What would the farmer say? Would he not say, 'Why should I employ you to smoke cigars which I pay for? If the cigar maker needs work, why should I not employ him myself, and smoke the cigars myself, since I am to pay for them?'

"To say that the extravagance of the rich finds useful employment for the poor is more foolish than to say that the drunkard finds useful employment for the brewers.

"The drunkard may have a better defence than the duke, because he may perhaps have produced, or earned, the money he spends in beer, whereas the duke's rents are not produced by the duke nor earned by him.

"That is clear, is it not? And yet a few weeks since I saw an article in a London weekly paper in which we were told that the thief was an indispensable member of Society, because he found employment for policemen, gaolers, builders of gaols, and other persons.

"The excuse for the thief is as valid as the excuse for the duke. The thief finds plenty of employment for the people. But who *pays* the persons employed?

"The police, the gaolers, and all the other persons employed in catching, holding, and feeding the thief, are paid out of the rates and taxes. Who pays the taxes? The British public. Then the British public have to support not only the police and the rest, but the thief as well.

"What do the police, the thief, and the

gaoler produce? Do they produce any wealth? No. They consume wealth, and the thief is so useful that if he died out for ever, it would pay us better to feed the gaolers and police for doing nothing than to fetch the thief back again to feed him as well.

"Work is useless unless it be productive work. It would be work for a man to dig a hole and then fill it up again; but the work would be of no benefit to the nation.

"Do not imagine, as some do, that increased consumption is a blessing. It is the amount of wealth you produce that makes a nation prosperous; and the idle rich man, who produces nothing, only makes his crime worse by spending a great deal."

"But," said the General, "I was talking about trade, not land."

"Well," said the wizard, "we were speaking of profits; and the same reasoning applies. For before a man can return money to the community he must take it from them, in profits. If you make a profit out of us by selling us milk, and then buy a saddle, you buy the saddle at our expense, and use it yourself."

"But you have not yet answered my argument," said Mr. Jorkle. "I said that to abolish competition would be to throw the country back into a state of stagnation, and barbarism, and dull monotony, and I defy you to contradict me."

The wizard bowed, and looked serious.

"Gentlemen," he said, "You are still under the impression that Socialism would be unjust,

and impractical; and that it would be in its effects disastrous!"

"That is our belief," answered Mr. Jorkle.

"Let us sit down here, for a little while," said the wizard, pointing to a seat in the warm sunshine. "I want to tell you some facts."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN
THE EARTH FOR ALL

"YOU—hah—mean to say," said the General, angrily, "that it would be right to rob me of my land?"

The wizard blew a smoke ring and smiled. "I do not defend robbery," he said; "I defend the recovery of stolen property. Socialism is not a thief; it is a policeman."

"But, dammit, I have as much right to my land as you have to your hat!" cried the General, hotly.

"I beg your pardon, and I beseech your indulgence, General," said the wizard, "for I am obliged to say that you have *no* right to your land—no right, legal nor moral."

"No legal right! No moral right! Hang it!" the General said, glaring. "What do you mean, sir?"

"Let us begin with the law," said the wizard, quietly. "The law of England does not recognise private ownership of land. According to the law all land is held in trust of the King."

"On what authority—hah—do you make that statement, sir?" demanded the General.

The wizard blew another ring. "I will give you," said he, "three good authorities: Sir

William Blackstone, Sir Edward Coke, and Sir Frederick Pollock. Those are eminent lawyers, you must admit."

"Well, and what do they say?"

"Sir William Blackstone says:

"Accurately and strictly speaking, there is no foundation in nature or in natural law why a set of words on parchment should convey the dominion of land. Alloidal (absolute) property no subject in England now has, it being a received and now undeniable principle in law that all lands in England are holden mediately or immediately of the King.

"I think that is explicit. But I will quote the other authorities. Sir Edward Coke says:

"All lands or tenements in England in the hands of the subjects, are holden mediately or immediately of the King. For, in the law of England, we have not any subject's land that is not holden.

"Could anything be more clearly and confidently expressed? Sir Frederick Pollock says:

"No absolute ownership of land is recognised by our law books, except in the Crown. All lands are supposed to be held immediately or mediately of the Crown, though no rent or service may be payable, and no grant from the Crown on record.

"Legally, therefore, my dear General, the so-called owner of an estate in England only holds that estate as on a kind of lease from the Crown. The Crown giveth and the Crown can take away."

"But—hah—that," said the General, "is merely a legal theory."

"Well,' answered the wizard, "it is the law;

and it proves what I said, that you have no legal right to the land."

"And what about moral right?" said Mr. Jorkle.

"Well," the wizard answered, "there is no moral right. Private ownership of land rests upon one of three excuses. First of all, there is the right of conquest. But that is not a moral right; it is only robber's law: the law of might.

"Land won by the sword must be held by the sword. Do you stand to the law of conquest, General?"

"Why not?" the General asked.

"Because," said the wizard, "you would fall by it. For if you claim that land belongs of right to those who are strong enough to take it, you admit that you have neither legal nor moral cause of complaint against those who are strong enough to take it from you.

"Say you hold the land justly yours because William of Normandy won it from the English people, and gave it to your ancestor, and you must admit the right of the English people to win it back from you, if they can, and hold it for themselves."

"But what nonsense," said Mr. Jorkle; "nearly all land, I should say all, privately held in England, has been bought and paid for."

"If you say that you show a very small knowledge of the facts," said the wizard; "much land now held has been actually stolen, or has been held by right of gift from those who originally stole it. But that by the way.

Let us now look at the moral right of the purchaser of land."

"Just so," said the General.

"No man," said the wizard, "can have a moral right to own land given to him or sold to him, unless it can first be proved that the giver or seller of the land had a moral right to the land he gave or sold.

"If I stole the General's watch and gave or sold it to you, you would have no moral right to keep it. Your moral right would be the right to demand from me your money back. You cannot justly, nor legally, hold stolen property upon the plea that you bought it of the thief.

"Now, there can be no original private right to land. The original right to land is the right of the whole people: the right of the inhabitants of the earth to all the land thereon."

"And on the strength of this sophistry you propose to rob us of our property!" exclaimed Mr. Jorkle.

"I beg your pardon," said the wizard. "I do not propose to do anything of the kind, and I don't think the Socialists propose to do anything of the kind. We deny that any man has a moral or legal right to own our country, or any part of it; but we do not propose to take all he possesses without any payment, and leave him to starve."

"And, pray," asked the General, "what do you propose?"

"Well," said the wizard, "my idea is that the land should become the property of the nation, and that those who now claim the right

to the land should be paid a reasonable sum."

"And I call that tyranny and robbery," said the General, "and—hah—lawless and immoral."

The wizard smiled. "The present laws," he said, "have been mostly made by the rich; very largely by the rich holders of land. Do you expect us to obey them?"

"Certainly; dammit!" said the General.

"Why?" asked the wizard.

"Because—hah—the laws are the laws of the land," the General answered.

"And are you, General, prepared to obey the laws of the land?" the wizard inquired.

"Hah! Of course," said the General.

"Very good," said the wizard, "then if the Legislature makes new laws, a law for the compulsory purchase of land, for instance, you will obey it? For Parliament is Parliament, is it not, whether it be a Parliament of landlords or of the people?"

"But such a law—hah—is a piece of unprecedented injustice!" said the General.

"Why, no," said the wizard; "I will show you precedents. It has always been held that private rights must yield to public necessity. If a Bill be got to construct a railway, or a reservoir, or other public convenience, the land needed can be, and has been, bought by compulsory purchase, and not at the owner's price. But now I will give you two precedents of a very striking kind. I will ask you to compare your claim to the ownership of land with the claim of an author to his book, and of an inventor to his invention.

"A landlord does not make the land; he holds it.

"But if a man invent a new machine or a new process, or if he write a poem or a book, he may claim to have made the invention or the book, and may justly claim payment for the use of them by other men.

"An inventor or an author has, therefore, a better claim to payment for his work than a landlord has to payment for the use of the land he calls his. Now, how does the law act towards these men?

"The landlord may call the land his all the days of his life, and at his death may bequeath it to his heirs. For a thousand years the owners of an estate may charge rent for it, and at the end of the thousand years the estate will still be theirs, and the rent will still be running on and growing ever larger and larger. And at any suggestion that the estate should lapse from the possession of the owners and become the property of the people, the said owners will lustily raise the cry of 'Confiscation.'

"The patentee of an invention may call the invention his own, and may charge royalties upon its use for a *space of fourteen years.* At the end of that time his patent lapses and becomes public property, without any talk of compensation or any cry of confiscation. Thus the law holds that an inventor is well paid by fourteen years' rent for a thing he made himself, while the landlord is *never* paid for the land he did not make.

"The author of a book holds the copyright of the book for a period of forty-four years, or for his own life and seven years after.

which ever period be the longer. At the expiration of that time the book becomes public property. Thus the law holds that an author is well paid by forty-four years' rent for a book which he has made, but that the landlord is *never* paid for the land which he did not make.

"If the same law that applies to the land applied to books and to inventions, the inheritors of the rights of Caxton and Shakespeare would still be able to charge, the one a royalty on every printing press in use, and the other a royalty on every copy of Shakespeare's poems sold. Then there would be royalties on all the looms, engines, and other machines, and upon all the books, music, engravings, and what not; so that the cost of education, recreation, travel, clothing, and nearly everything else we use would be enhanced enormously. But, thanks to a very wise and fair arrangement, an author or an inventor has a good chance to be well paid, and after that the people have a chance to enjoy the benefits of his genius.

"Now, if it is right and expedient thus to deprive the inventor or the author of his own production after a time, and to give the use thereof to the public, what sense or justice is there in allowing a landowner to hold land and to draw an ever-swelling rent to the exclusion, inconvenience, and expense of the people for ever? And by what process of reasoning can a landlord charge an author with immorality or confiscation for suggesting that the same law should apply to the land he did not make that the author cheerfully allows to be applied to the books he does make?

"For the landlord to speak of confiscation in the face of the laws of patent and of copyright seems to me the coolest impudence.

"And you will notice that when the patent of fourteen years, or the copyright of forty-four years has expired, the inventor or author gets *nothing*.

"But you object that it would be robbery to take your land from you after you have drawn the rent for centuries.

"And when we propose to treat you much better than law and custom treat the *creators* of books and machines, and to pay you a reasonable price for the land you never made, you call out that you are being robbed. And what do you think of yourselves?" The wizard puffed at his cigar and smiled.

"Hah! Hang it all!" said the General, "two blacks don't make a white, don't you know? The patent and copyright law may be rot, and that sort of thing, but that's no reason why you should steal my land, by George!"

"There are no blacks," said the wizard; "we don't complain of the patent and copyright laws. They are founded upon the just and sensible principle that the good of the nation must over-rule the profit of the individual.

"Land is necessary to the nation. Without land the people cannot produce, nor enjoy the necessaries of life. Without land they cannot have food, clothing, houses, nor fuel; they cannot have woods, fields, gardens, nor streams; they cannot have air, nor exercise, nor health.

"And the landlord would have us believe that it is immoral and dishonest of the people

to refuse to pay him an enormous and ruinous tax upon their industry, and pleasure, and health. I never did believe that, and some day the masses of the people will cease to believe it. Then you will be lucky if you get anything for your land at all."

"Hah! And suppose the people—as you call them, begad—robbed us of our land and shared it out amongst them—hah—how much better off would they be?" the General demanded.

"You think, then," said Mr. Fry, "that Socialists propose to divide the land? But there you are quite wrong.

"Socialists have no more idea of taking the land from its present holders and 'sharing it out' amongst the poor than they have of taking the railways from the railway companies and sharing the carriages and engines amongst the passengers.

"When the London County Council municipalised the tram service they did not rob the companies, nor did they share out the cars amongst the people.

"Socialism does not mean the 'sharing out' of property; on the contrary, it means the collective ownership of property.

"Socialism does not mean one acre and half a cow for each subject; it means that Britain shall be owned intact by the whole people, and shall be governed and worked by the whole people, for the benefit of the whole people

"Just as the Glasgow tram service, the Manchester gas service, and the general postal service are owned, managed, and

used by the citizens of Manchester and Glasgow, or by the people of Britain, for the general advantage.

"Under Socialism no citizen would be allowed to call a single inch of land his own. All the land would belong to the people, and would be used by the people, for the best advantage of the people."

"And do you suppose," said Mr. Jorkle, "that the people would be content with such an arrangement, and would not quarrel as to who should have the best land?"

"My dear sir," said the wizard, "do the guests at a *table d'hôte* quarrel over the best cuts, and the best sauces? There is enough for all. Some like to live in the hills, and some in the valleys; some like the breezy East Coast, and some the milder South. All parts of our islands are habitable and pleasant, and the people would be free to move about. There would be room for all, and air and sun and water and land for all."

"Ah!" said Mr. Jorkle, "and how do you propose to evade the natural law that as the means of subsistence increase the population increases?"

"You mean," said the wizard, "that if people were more prosperous they would have more children, and so there would again be poverty."

"Just so," said Mr. Jorkle, "and I have never met anyone who could answer the argument. But what do you say, sir?"

"I say it isn't true, that's all," answered the wizard; "the fact is, that the wealthier, better

fed, better educated classes have fewer children than the indigent and ignorant."

"I deny it," said Mr. Jorkle; "it is a natural law."

"A natural fiddlestick," said the wizard, snapping his fingers. "Suppose that it is a natural law—which it isn't—do you suppose a community of educated and intelligent men and women are going to submit to it? It is a law easy to control, and is controlled in most of the more highly civilised States at present. An ignorant people might breed beyond subsistence point; an enlightened people would not."

"And who is going to teach the people all this wisdom?" asked Mr. Jorkle.

"Ah!" repeated the wizard, "who, indeed? *You* don't seem to have taught them much."

"Well," said the General, emphatically, "all I've got to say is that—hah—I will not give up my land without a fight. Hah! That's flat!"

The wizard and the General looked each other steadily in the face. Then Mr. Fry said, gravely, "General, you are a fighting man. It is your trade. I do not deal in blows and bullets, only in reasons. I hope it will never come to fighting. I feel sure it never will. If it does, I hope you will be beaten." The wizard threw away his cigar, and the three walked slowly and thoughtfully towards the Guest House.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN
MOTE AND BEAM

" ENTLEMEN," said the wizard, smiling and tapping his snuff-box, "when I hear your expressions of virtuous indignation against Socialism I am tempted to conclude that you have come direct from heaven. Instead of which I understand you are modern Englishmen, and live in London. Surely it was from London I brought you, was it not?"

"Where else?" asked Mr. Jorkle.

"But," said the wizard, "if you come from England, and from London, it seems to me that you are exceedingly fastidious. Is it possible that you do not know London; or have you forgotten it?"

"There are worse places than London, by George!" said the General. "Hah! You may take that from me."

"Socialist places?" the wizard asked.

"No! Hang it, of course not," said the General.

"Well," said the wizard, "but I understand that when you condemn Socialism you speak as Englishmen and not as angels. Or what am I to understand?"

"As Englishmen. What else?" asked Mr. Jorkle.

The wizard put on his gold-rimmed spectacles and looked mildly at his companions.

"It is astonishing," he said, "it is incredible. You actually compare the Socialist ideal unfavourably with the modern British fact."

"There are worse places than England," the General repeated.

"Yes, granted," said the wizard, "but you seem to believe that there can never be any better. And I say you must have forgotten England if you ever really knew it.

"Listen! England is full of poverty, of ignorance, of crime, vice, drunkenness, and disease. Do you deny this?"

"Tut, tut. You exaggerate," said Mr. Jorkle; "you have been misled by Socialist demagogues."

The wizard smiled. "You are mistaken," he said. "I will show you the facts without quoting a single word from any Socialist. Let us deal first with the poverty.

"The Right Honourable H. Campbell-Bannerman, our present Prime Minister, is not a Socialist. He said a few years ago that there were in our country over ten millions of persons always on the verge of destitution."

"Oh! Bannerman!" said the General.

"You do not consider him a good authority?" said the wizard. "I will quote from a speech made by the late Marquis of Salisbury, then the Tory Prime Minister." The wizard took out a pocket-book, turned over the leaves, and read:

They looked around them and saw a *growing* mass of *poverty* and *want of employment,* and of course the one

object which every statesman who loved his country should desire to attain was that there might be the largest amount of profitable employment for the mass of the people.

He did not say that he had any patent or certain remedy for *the terrible evils which beset us on all sides,* but he did say that it was time they left off mending the constitution of Parliament, and that they turned all the wisdom and energy Parliament could combine together in order to remedy the *sufferings* under which so *many* of their countrymen laboured.

"You will notice, General, that his lordship speaks of the terrible evils which beset us on all sides, and that he expresses the opinion that the poverty is increasing, and he confesses that he has no remedy to suggest."

"He might have begun with the drink traffic," growled Mr. Jorkle.

"Oh," said the wizard, quietly, "you admit the drunkenness, then?"

"Of course," said Mr. Jorkle.

"And you admit, I suppose, the vice and the crime, and the ignorance, and the disease?" the wizard said.

"There is a great deal of crime," said Mr. Jorkle; "nobody denies it."

"Nobody can deny it," said the wizard; "but do you deny the poverty?"

"I think it is exaggerated," said the financier, sulkily.

"So? Then our two Prime Ministers were mistaken? Possibly they were misled by Socialist demagogues." The wizard opened the pocket-book again. "I will give you," said he, "an opinion expressed by the Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain." He read:

For my part neither sneers, nor abuse, nor opposition shall induce me to accept as the will of the Almighty, and the unalterable dispensation of His providence, a state of things under which *millions lead sordid, hopeless, and monotonous lives, without pleasure in the present, and without prospect for the future.*

"I hope," he said, "you do not call Mr. Chamberlain a Socialist. At any rate, the opinions I have quoted are not challenged. They are supported by overwhelming testimony. Allow me to read you a few words of General Booth's." Again the wizard turned to the pocket-book and read:

444 persons are reported by the police to have attempted to commit suicide in London last year, and probably as many more succeeded in doing so. 200 persons died from starvation in the same period. We have in this one city about 100,000 paupers, 30,000 prostitutes, 33,000 homeless adults, and 35,000 wandering children of the slums. There is a standing army of out-of-works numbering 80,000, which is often increased in special periods of commercial depression or trade disputes to 100,000. 12,000 criminals are always inside Her Majesty's prisons, and about 15,000 are outside. 70,000 charges for petty offences are dealt with by the London magistrates every year. The best authorities estimate that 10,000 new criminals are manufactured per annum. We have tens of thousands of dwellings known to be overcrowded, unsanitary, or dangerous.

"From that statement it appears," said the wizard, "that I do not at all exaggerate when I say that this country is full of vice and crime, of poverty and disease. And General Booth is no Socialist.

"Now, gentlemen, you have there a picture of London. But it is not by any means a complete

picture. It does not give the background of ugly streets, and mean buildings, and blatant advertisements. It says nothing about ignorance, nor drink. It does not mention the idle rich, nor their senseless luxury. It ignores a venal Press, and a cynical Parliament, and an effete religion.

"Allow me to add a few touches to the picture. In London one and a-quarter millions of persons get less than a guinea a week per family. During every year more than two and a-quarter millions of persons receive poor-law relief in the British Islands. In England and Wales 72,000 persons die each year in workhouses, hospitals, infirmaries, or asylums. In London alone there are 100,000 persons in workhouses, hospitals, prisons, or industrial schools. In London one person out of every four will die in a workhouse, a hospital, or a lunatic asylum. Throughout the British Islands about 55 per cent. of the working-class children die before they reach five years of age. Of those deaths about four-fifths are preventable.

"Now, in a Socialist State there would not be, there *could* not be, a thief, a loafer, nor a beggar; there would be no ignorance, no poverty, no preventable disease; therefore, there would be no drunkenness, and little vice. And you are afraid that Socialism would spoil our beautiful civilisation."

"Yes, but—hah—look here," said the General, "liberty's a jewel, don't you know. We don't want a crowd of officials poking their noses into our private lives—hah—and making slaves of us. Dammit!"

"Slaves! Overseers!" said the wizard. "Do you know anything of the lives of the workers? Here is a cutting from a daily paper. It is part of a letter sent by a shop girl of Brixton:

> For many hours a day we are little better than slaves, at the beck and call of employer and customer. We have not a minute to ourselves, and are surrounded by a network of rules and regulations.

"Mr. Jorkle must know how severe is the discipline in offices, and how strict is the labour in factories. There is no whip, but there is a more terrible instrument—the sack!

"You gentlemen talk about the danger of slavery under Socialism as though English men and women were at present free. You draw horrible pictures of a monotonous and cheerless life under Socialism as though England to-day were merrie and fair. But our England is sordid and ugly. Think of the houses, the costumes, the amusements of the people.

"Have you ever seen the regiments of city clerks in uniform marching out from the railway stations to business? Have you seen the streets they live in, the schools they are crammed in, the offices where each man is a cog in a machine?

"Have you ever seen the vast districts of houses which Ruskin called 'brick boxes with slate lids,' the houses all ugly, and all inconvenient, and all alike; street after street of them, one street so like another that a man would go wrong if he did not see the name on the corner? Have you ever considered the working lives of the millions of spinners,

weavers, colliers, shopmen, tailors, chain-makers —what not? Do you not know that these people perform the same tasks, at the same hours, for years—for a lifetime? Do you find that painters, and poets, and playwriters, and musicians are free to give their genius its bent? Or do you know that most of these men must work to the market: 'must please to live'?

"You are afraid for the morals of the people under Socialism. Listen to Mr. Joseph Chamberlain." The wizard opened his pocket-book once more and read:

> The ordinary conditions of life among a large proportion of the population are such that common decency is absolutely impossible; and all this goes on in sight of the mansions of the rich, where undoubtedly there are people who would gladly remedy it if they could. It goes on in presence of wasteful extravagance and luxury, which bring but little pleasure to those who indulge in them; and private charity is powerless, religious organisations can do nothing to remedy the evils which are so deep-seated in our social system.

"That seems to me a calm and moderate statement of a very painful and disgraceful fact. Let me add to it an official statement of the conditions of life in Scotland:

> Much has been done in the way of improvement in various parts of Scotland, but 22 per cent. of Scottish families still dwell in a single room each, and the proportion in the case of Glasgow rises to 33 per cent. The little town of Kilmarnock, with only 28,447 inhabitants, huddles even a slightly larger proportion of its families into single-room tenements. Altogether, there are in Glasgow over 120,000, and in all Scotland 560,000 persons (more than one-eighth of the whole population), who do not know the decency of even a two-roomed home.

"Do not think this state of things is confined to Scotland, or to a few towns. It is estimated that three and a-quarter millions of persons in these islands live in overcrowded dwellings, the average being three persons to one room.

"You denounce Socialism as though the present condition of England were perfection. But here are the facts, and no man can deny them.

"Large numbers of honest and industrious people are badly fed, badly clothed, and badly housed.

"Hundreds of thousands of people die every year from preventable diseases.

"The average duration of life amongst the population is unnaturally short.

"Very many people, after lives of toil, are obliged to seek refuge in the workhouse, where they die despised and neglected, branded with the shameful brand of pauperism.

"It is an almost invariable rule that those who work hardest and longest in this country are the worst paid and the least respected.

"The wealthiest men in our nation are men who never did a useful day's work.

"Wealth and power are more prized and more honoured than wisdom, or industry, or virtue.

"Hundreds of thousands of men and women, willing to work, are unable to find employment.

"Through competition millions of men are employed in useless and undignified work, and all the industrial machinery of the nation is

thrown out of gear, so that one greedy scrambler may overreach another.

"It is not only the wrong of this that I resent, it is the *waste*. Look through the slums and see what childhood, girlhood, womanhood, and manhood have there become. Think what a waste of beauty, of virtue, of strength, and of all the power and goodness that go to make a nation great is being consummated there by ignorance and by injustice.

"For, depend upon it, every one of our brothers or sisters ruined or slain by poverty or vice, is a loss to the nation of so much bone and sinew, of so much courage and skill, of so much glory and delight.

"In spite of their manifold disadvantages, some few of the workers have displayed fine qualities of mind and body.

"There was William Smith, the greatest English geologist; he was a poor farmer's son, and chiefly self-taught; there was Sir William Herschel, the great astronomer; he played the oboe in a watering-place band; there were Faraday, the bookbinder, and Sir Humphrey Davy, the apothecary's apprentice, both great scientists; there were James Watt, the mathematical instrument maker, and George Stephenson, the collier, and Arkwright, the barber, and Hunter, the great anatomist, who was a poor Scotch carpenter.

"Cast your eyes, then, my critical friends, over the Registrar-General's returns, and imagine, if you can, how many gentle nurses, good mothers, sweet singers, brave soldiers, and

clever artists, inventors, and thinkers are swallowed up every year in that ocean of crime and sorrow, which is known to the official mind as 'The high death rate of the wage-earning classes.'"

The wizard shrugged his shoulders and rose. "Enough of your grand modern England," he said; "I will take you now across this Socialist England, and you shall make your own comparisons."

The General and Mr. Jorkle rose.

"Hah! You know the old wheeze about a —hah—fellow convinced against his will," said the General.

"Yes," the wizard answered, "I can only show you the country; you must see it with your own eyes. Light!"

"Sir."

"The flying machine."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN
THE MAGIC BALLOON

THE flying machine rose like a huge iridescent bubble, changing its brilliant hues in the May sunshine, and passed swiftly over the fertile lands and spacious towns of new England. The three looked down from the small silver car at the noble panorama of blossoming woods, flowery meadows, green grass lands, clean rivers, picturesque villages, and well-kept, winding roads. The wizard quoted from Milton:

> Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
> Whilst the landskip round it measures;
> Russet lawns and fallows grey,
> Where the nibbling flocks do stray:
> Mountains on whose barren breast
> The labouring clouds do often rest;
> Meadows trim with daisies pied;
> Shallow brooks and rivers wide.

"It certainly is a very bright, rich country," said the General, "and all the houses trim and healthy. Hah! No smoke nuisance, by George! and that sort of thing."

"You never saw Lancashire look like this, General," answered the wizard, "and you must remember that there is not a thief, a beggar,

nor a destitute human being in the country. That there are no ignorant, unloved children, no workhouses, no prisons, no slums."

"Hah!" said the General; "how is it done, by Jove?"

"Hypnotism," suggested Mr. Jorkle.

The wizard laughed. "The change," said he, "is due to the changed ideal of the people; to a re-arrangement of society upon more practical and more human lines."

"I should like that explained," said the General.

"Well," said the wizard, "this is a planned and ordered society. *Our* English society is a barbarous anarchy. We believe in an open scramble for money, and tell ourselves it is all for the best because a few succeed in winning luxury, superfluous wealth, and honour. The misery, the vice, the awful waste and suffering and ignorance we regard as inevitable."

"So they are," said Mr. Jorkle, with a grunt.

"These people do not think so," said the wizard. "They have faced the problem in a reasonable and humane spirit, and have solved it."

"Hah! What problem?" asked the General.

"The problem," said the wizard, "may be expressed in various ways. I should express it thus: Given a country and a people, find how the people may make the best of the country and themselves."

"And how do they answer it?" Mr. Jorkle asked.

"Not in our way," said the wizard; "they begin by deciding as to the essentials to a

happy and useful human life, and they then arrange that those essentials shall be brought within the reach of all."

"Hah! Very good," said the General; "but what *are* the essentials, hang it?"

"I think you will agree with me," said the wizard, "that the essentials to a proper human life may be divided into two kinds: bodily essentials and mental essentials."

"Well?" said the General.

"The bodily essentials," said the wizard, "are food, clothing, shelter, and fuel, chiefly'.'

"Hah! Yes."

"These should be found for all. For no man can be healthy nor happy unless he has enough food, proper clothing, and a pleasant home.

"On the other hand, an excess of these things is not good, but bad. No man needs two houses to live in, two beds to sleep in; no man is the better for over-eating or over drinking.

"These people would despise a glutton or an idler, and would regard it as insanity to allow one citizen to be hungry or houseless while another wasted food and wealth which he could not use."

"Hah! Well, I must say," remarked the General, "that sounds sensible. Hah! I've always thought, don't you know, that it was devilish hard lines that any fellow should—hah—be destitute, and that sort of thing, if it could be prevented. But how *can* it be prevented?"

"These people," said the wizard, "make the country and all its resources the property of the

whole people. And besides that they make the welfare of every citizen the care of the whole people."

The General shook his head. "No, no," said he, "that will not work. Hah! There must be private property, dammit."

"Very well," said the wizard, "I will give you an illustration from the Army."

The General laughed.

"In an infantry regiment," said the wizard, "does not each soldier have a rifle and accoutrements served out to him?"

"Certainly."

"Does any other soldier ever try to take them from him?"

"Of course not."

"Are not all the arms and accoutrements the property of the King?"

"Quite so."

"In the field does not each company have cooking kettles?"

"Yes."

"Are not those kettles the property of the King?"

"Yes."

"Are they not used for the good of the whole company?"

"Yes."

"Does A Company ever take away the kettles of B or C Company?"

"No."

"But if A Company's kettles were lost on the march would not the other companies supply them, giving, say, one kettle each to A Company?"

"Of course."

The wizard took out his snuff-box. "Well, General," he said, "what can be done in the Army with cots, and beds, and barracks, and utensils, and arms, and ammunition, can be done in a nation with houses and food and clothing. And I will point out to you that where there is food, or other necessaries for all, no person need begrudge another person his share."

"But is there enough for all?" exclaimed Mr. Jorkle.

"I have already told you so, and why," said the wizard. "But now I want to give the General another example from his own profession."

"Go ahead," said the General.

"Well," said the wizard, "in the Army, I believe, the rations are served out to the men every morning, and each company gets a fixed allowance of bread and meat, per head."

"Just so."

"Would you think it a better plan to pile all the day's rations up on the barrack square, and let the men fight for them?"

"Of course not."

"No; for then some men would starve ,and some would be hurt, and some would have more than they could eat. That would be bad for the regiment, would it not?"

"Rather."

"Yes. And it is bad for the nation. You want your whole regiment to be well fed and well drilled, and well armed, because then they are healthier and more efficient. But you do

not want all the people well fed, and well taught, and well cared for. You prefer a scramble, with the result of much misery, ignorance, poverty, and death for the many, and useless luxury and baneful idleness for the few, to an efficient and prosperous and happy *nation*."

The wizard took a pinch of snuff and looked at the General keenly.

"Hah! Go on, dammit," said the General. "What next?"

"We have been speaking only of the physical essentials to a proper human life," said the wizard, "but there are the higher essentials. These are love, parentage, fellowship, knowledge, morality, culture, and amusement. I need not again remind you that a very poor share of these essentials falls to the lot of the bulk of the people in *our* England. You know that. But have you ever asked yourselves why it is so?"

"Hah! Give me your opinion, if you don't mind," said the General.

"With pleasure," said the wizard; "the masses are ignorant and poor, I believe, because the successful classes and the privileged classes have a base and erroneous ideal of life. What do you think, Mr. Jorkle."

"I will hear you out first," answered the financier.

"Good," said the wizard. "The privileged classes prize material wealth. Their ideal of life is riches and power. They fear that if the masses get knowledge and equal opportunities their own luxury and ease and authority will

be taken from them. Therefore, they oppose real education, and real reform. They would rather allow the masses to be ignorant, inefficient, and unhappy; they would rather allow the children to peak and pine and die, than endanger their own flesh pots, and trinkets and fopperies and pride."

"All men are selfish. It is every man for himself," said Mr. Jorkle.

"Yes," said the wizard, "in *our* England, it is; because our people know no better. But when one has physical health and comfort one can be happy without luxury and waste. And these people recognise that fact. Real happiness comes by higher paths. Real happiness comes by service, by achievement, by purity of morals, and loftiness of mind. Give a man health, respect, food, a home, a wife and children, congenial recreation and congenial work, and he is happier than a millionaire or an emperor.

"There is not a rich man in this new England, and I might almost venture to say that there is not an unhappy man. My dear General, what do you say?"

The General coughed, frowned, stared hard through his monocle, and replied in the following eloquent speech: "Hah! Look here, Mr. Fry—hah! Hang it all! You speak devilish well, don't you know, and—hah—you mean well, and that sort of thing. But—hah—I know my world, dammit, and it won't *do*, sir. No, by George, it will *not* do!

"Hah! If men were angels—well, if men were honest, and brainy, and good, and—hah—

that sort of thing, it might work. But they are mean, and greedy, and devilish stupid, don't you know; and they have always been the same, dash it, as history proves right slap bang up to the hilt. Hah! Yes.

"Hah! Look at London. What can you make of such a mob of bounders? Talk about silk purses and sow's ears! Hah! It is always six to four if you meet a stranger that he's an ass, or a cad, or man on the make. Ours is a jerry-made society of—hah—jerrymanders. We have jerry builders, and jerry dealers, hang it! We have jerry peers, and jerry baronets, and a jerry-built Parliament. Look at the army! Hah! Look at the Press! How many men could you trust with your bank book, or your daughter, or the secrets of your business? Hah! I'm an old man, by George! I've seen the world and mixed with men and women, by Jove! And I don't believe that our jerry-built society can be reformed, don't you know, by a jerry-made Democracy. Men are mixed—hah—men are bad. You can't raise them, nor mend them, nor save them. They don't know how to be good. Hah! They don't want to be good! Hah! They never will be good, dammit! And as for Socialism—— Hallo! What place is that?"

The balloon was floating slowly over a noble city. The three looked down upon the silvery river, spanned by graceful bridges; they saw the wide avenues, the spacious squares, the gardens, fountains, towers, and spires, and the red roofs of innumerable houses. As far as the eye could reach the city spread, rosy, glittering, and

beautiful; and below them, over the domes and chimneys sang the skylarks.

"You don't know this place, General?" said the wizard.

"I certainly don't," said the General.

"Well," said the wizard, "this is London."

"London! Hah! London!" The General looked eagerly over the side of the car.

"London," said the wizard, gravely. Then he opened the snuff-box, took a pinch of snuff, and sneezed. And at the sneeze the bubble balloon burst, and with a short, harsh cry in their ears, the General and his companions began to fall through the air.

"Hah! Confound it all," exclaimed the General, "we're falling. Hah! Ho! Eh?"

* * * * * *

Major-General Sir Frederick Manningtree Storm, M.P., stared in a bewildered way at his friend Jorkle. The Honourable Member for Shantytown East returned the gaze. "God bless my soul!" exclaimed the General, "I—hah—I must have been dreaming!"

"Hum! I've been asleep myself," said Mr. Jorkle. "What's that row?"

"It's a band," replied the General. "Hallo! What's going on there? Hey?"

Several Guinea Pigs were standing up at the windows of the smoke-room and looking into the street. A strident brass band was approaching from the East.

The General went to one of the windows, followed by Mr. Jorkle. "What's the fun, doctor?" the General asked.

"Oh, only the hungry army," said the doctor, with a yawn; "one more procession of Tired Tims and Weary Willies. Look at them. A cake of soap would last the whole demonstration a week."

"Unemployed?" asked Mr. Jorkle.

"Yes, they are unemployed," said a tall young man in riding costume; "haven't been employed for yeahs and yeahs."

Mr. Jorkle shrugged his shoulders and left the window. "Bickers," he said to the waiter, "put me up a dozen natives and a bottle of champagne in the luncheon room, and telephone to my office for them to send the motor car round here. Will you have a snack, General?" he added. But as the General was intent upon the procession and did not hear him, Mr. Jorkle went downstairs.

It was a long procession, neither van nor rear being in sight. The approaching band was now quite close to the club. It was playing "There is a Happy Land." The General, gazing blankly into the street, produced his cigar case and lighted a cigar.

"They are a noble army of martyrs, General," said the hunting man.

The General frowned and said "Hah!"

"How would you like to lead them to victory, General?" asked the doctor.

The General said "Hah!"

"What a crowd of them," the doctor went on; "really they are a public menace. It is a horrible mistake to coddle and foster these swarms of the unfit."

The General said nothing.

The miserable army tramped on. They were, for the most part, the ill-clothed, rough-spun men of the labouring class, with here and there a better-dressed artisan. Their boots were down at heel, their hands were coarse, their faces grimy and weather-beaten. They tramped on silently, looking straight before them, or on the ground. They seemed dull and dispirited, but not angry nor ashamed. With a strange stolidity of endurance, worthy of Oriental fatalists, they trudged along upon their hungry march through the wealth and ostentation of the indifferent West.

"If I'd my way with them——" the hunting man began, addressing the General.

"Hah!" said the General, and, turning sharply on his heel, he left the club.

Directly he reached the street he was accosted by a short, sturdy, grey-haired man in patched moleskin clothes, who rattled a collecting box before him.

The General looked him hard in the eyes for a moment, then produced his purse, took out several sovereigns, and put them one by one into the box.

The workman's jaw dropped, his pale blue eyes dilated, he touched his old cap, but did not speak. The General walked slowly on and left him staring.

At the corner the General stopped and gazed dubiously at the grim regiment tramping past. Still gazing, he signalled a hansom. The man drove up and the General got in. "Go to the Rag," he said, and sat back, smoking.

For some minutes he smoked and thought, paying no heed to the traffic. Then he threw away his cigar, curled his moustaches, and said, "Hah! Dammit! Hah! What a devilish odd dream. Hah! By Jove! The—the unemployed. Hah! The unemployed! Hah! Hum! The—hah—the unemployed. God! God!"

THE END.

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